



PHD

Organisational Ambidexterity: Bridging the divide between theory and practice

Rose, Natasha

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Organisational Ambidexterity: Bridging the Divide Between Theory and Practice

Natasha Rose

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

School of Management

April 2017

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Extended Abstract

It is commonly understood in organisational studies literature that an organisation's ability to simultaneously exploit and explore opportunities enhances its long-term performance - this is known as organisational ambidexterity (March, 1991). Despite its promise of performance current literature lacks clarity about how organisational ambidexterity is achieved in practice. Similarly literature omits how ambidexterity can be viewed as an intentional strategy to help organisations with complex structures respond swiftly and flexibly to change. Organisational ambidexterity is primarily seen as a strategic level construct that research and evidence has failed to link to individual actors, their motivations or the organisation's environment. This thesis takes a strategy as practice perspective of organisational ambidexterity and investigates this phenomenon in the telecoms and technology sectors. The empirical studies were conducted across six organisations by means of 47 in depth, semi-structured interviews.

This thesis consists of a portfolio of three research papers, each taking a multilevel perspective of organisational ambidexterity. The first paper segments organisational ambidexterity into its microfoundations because many firm level constructs are embedded in individual actions and interactions. Thus a need exists to identify those microfoundations that underpin organisational ambidexterity. The second paper considers the different forms of organising available to organisations in pursuit of organisational ambidexterity. It identifies the organising behaviours required to manage paradoxes. The third paper addresses the interlinkages between microfoundations, namely praxis, practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006). This provides causal mechanisms explaining how and why individuals enable organisational ambidexterity.

The overarching contribution of this thesis portfolio is that it theoretically extends existing organisational ambidexterity literature with a strategy as practice lens to understand the microfoundations of ambidexterity. Practically it identifies explanations regarding how organisational ambidexterity is enabled, the implications of those practices and the consequences of those enabling practices. This research aims to contribute theoretical and practical knowledge that produces purposefulness in academic / practitioner collaborative research. In so doing it will increase levels of relevance and impact to bridge the divide between theory and practice.

Key Words: Organisational Ambidexterity, Microfoundations, Strategy as practice

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter represents a consolidated overview of the research while Chapter 2 contextualises and links the autonomous research papers. Thus this chapter sets forth an overarching view of the literature supporting this research on organisational ambidexterity. It also provides a generic view of the methods followed to undertake this research. In addition this chapter introduces the contributions of this research and concludes with a structure outline of this thesis portfolio.

Organisational ambidexterity is an increasingly prevalent theme in organisational studies. It is defined as the organisation's ability to pursue two seemingly disparate logics simultaneously (March, 1991) while regulating the tensions between those logics. Scholars have claimed that an organisation's long-term success is dependent on its ability to simultaneously explore new opportunities and exploit current certainties (Raisch et al., 2009; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996; March, 1991). Since this claim, research interest has grown exponentially as demonstrated by reviews of the topic (Turner et al., 2013; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013; Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013). As a result the ambidexterity field is dominated by theoretical advancements, however there remains a need to know more about how organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice (Turner et al., 2013; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

To understand organisational ambidexterity in practice requires unpacking the microfoundations that underpins it. As Greve (2013 p. 103) states, microfoundations can be viewed as the "windows to decision making processes". Thus understanding the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity will better equip scholars and practitioners to make informed ambidextrous decisions. It is therefore essential to understand how decisions about organisational ambidexterity are made. More specifically by understanding the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity, we may better understand the independent micro elements that together constitute organisational ambidexterity. This will shed light on who is involved in enabling organisational ambidexterity, what they do and how they do it. The patterns emerging from the interconnection between microfoundations may further increase understanding how independent micro elements can be linked together to aggregate these autonomous constructs to the collective level of the firm (Foss and Pedersen, 2014). This is of significance to organisational ambidexterity literature because Jarzabkowski et al. (2013, p. 37) refer to the failed "promise" of organisational

ambidexterity because it is seen as an organisational level construct that has not linked to the individual level nor considered the actions of individuals that enable it.

In essence this thesis segments the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity into its constituent parts by using a strategy as practice lens. This segmentation breaks down the phenomena to better interpret the autonomous microfoundations. The argument is made that by understanding each autonomous part individually this analysis will challenge our traditional assumptions about how ambidexterity occurs. This segmentation facilitates questioning the role of each constituent part in the construction of organisational ambidexterity. Furthermore it searches for meaning in the linkages between these autonomous microfoundations.

Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) advocates that an understanding of individuals will develop practical knowledge lacking in current research explaining how organisational ambidexterity is enabled. This is because individuals, their actions and practices have strategic consequences for the organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2009; Regner, 2003). Viewed from a strategy as practice perspective, the contribution to organisation studies is to understand what individuals do within the context of the organisation's environment to enact organisational ambidexterity because our understanding of this "remains obscure" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013, p. 42). Of significance are individual behaviours, practices and the context in which organisational ambidexterity is enacted.

Recent additions to the research topic have advanced how social and psychological factors impact an individual's willingness to engage in ambidextrous activities. One study has found that individuals are driven by socio-psychological attributes to enact organisational ambidexterity (Jansen et al., 2016) such as their belief systems and personal drive. However, personal attributes are influenced by the organisational context in which individuals work (Jansen et al., 2016). Other scholars have argued that various organisational factors influence an individual's ability to enact organisational ambidexterity. These factors include but are not limited to: management's ability to buffer individuals from barriers and constraints (Turner et al., 2015), the practices at the disposal of individuals within a given context (Turner et al., 2016) and an environment conducive to organisational ambidexterity (Carmeli and Halevi, 2009). These organisational factors shape and is shaped by organisational ambidexterity. In this way organisational ambidexterity has a top down and bottom up influence (Mom et al., 2007). The role that individuals

play in the enablement of organisational ambidexterity is increasingly gaining momentum as something that individuals at various hierarchical levels enact, using available organisational practices. As research moves away from the consideration that organisational ambidexterity is primarily something that the organisation directs, increasingly scholars call for more practically driven research (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

Two overarching concerns drive this research: Firstly, that we know very little about the microfoundations that underpins organisational ambidexterity (Turner et al., 2015). Secondly, despite the attractiveness of the topic and volume of research, it lacks empirical evidence grounded in practice (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013). Thus to fulfil the unrealised promise of organisational ambidexterity and to reap the benefits it espouses there is a growing need to bridge the divide between organisational ambidexterity theory and practice. To do this the research asks specific questions reflected in Table 1.1 on p. 15.

Table 1.1 Research Paper Outline

		Chapter 3 / Paper 1 (p. 51)	Chapter 4 / Paper 2 (p. 78)	Chapter 5 / Paper 3 (p. 115)
Theoretical Foundation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational Ambidexterity Microfoundations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational Ambidexterity Structural and Contextual Ambidexterity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational Ambidexterity Strategy as Practice Praxis, practices, practitioners
Research Questions and Problems	RQ.1	QUESTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity? 	QUESTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the forms of organising required to resolve paradoxical challenges? 	QUESTIONS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What interlinkages influence organisational ambidexterity?
	RQ.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do they contribute to enabling organisational ambidexterity in practice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which organising behaviours are necessary to manage paradoxes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do these interlinkages shape organisational ambidexterity?
Level of Analysis		Individual Level		
Methodology		Qualitative Research		
Key Findings in Support of RQ.1		Microfoundations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource Microfoundations Activities Microfoundations Systems Microfoundations 	Forms of Organising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenfields Operations Virtual Isolation Incubators 	Interlinkages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitude (Practitioner & Practices) Execution (Practices & Praxis) Exchange (Praxis & Practitioner)
		Conceptual Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbiosis between microfoundations 	Organising Behaviours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation level behaviours: Formal and informal Individual level behaviours 	Enabling Attributes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioural Contextual Directional
Link between Research Papers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines context and behaviours necessary for enablement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies interlinkages between micro elements

1.2 Overview of Literature

Organisational ambidexterity is investigated using two theoretical perspectives: organisational studies and a strategy as practice lens. The well-documented strategy as practice conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) serves as a basis for segmenting the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity into these constituent parts.

1.2.1 Organisational Ambidexterity

Organisational ambidexterity literature arose from a need to explain the seemingly disparate logics occurring simultaneously and management's need to manage those competing tensions. Originating from the concept of ambidexterity – using both hands simultaneously, the conceptualisation has since assumed meaning in organisation studies literature as an organisation's ability to do two things simultaneously (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013). And more specifically this research indicates that there are tensions between these seemingly competing logics. In doing so scholars have applied organisational ambidexterity to frame many different types of tensions. Some of which are listed in Table 1.2 on p. 17. Thus the popularity of the research topic is credited for its versatility (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013) and criticised for its fragmentation (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013).

Scholars have increasingly sought to explain how organisations capitalise on the tensions arising from the contradictory yet interdependent logics of exploration and exploitation. Organisational ambidexterity is essentially “the study of adaptive processes” which concerns balancing the tensions between exploring new possibilities and exploiting old certainties (March, 1991, p. 71).

Although scholars have used several definitions and extrapolations of organisational ambidexterity, the one pioneered by March (1991) is the preferred definition used in this research. March not only separates the competing tensions into exploration and exploitation but he explains that exploration is characterised by innovation, discovery, experimentation and risk-taking; and exploitation is synonymous with improvement, implementation, execution, efficiency and refinement.

Table 1.2. Various Dualities found in Organisational Ambidexterity

Definition	Tensions
"The ability to simultaneously pursue both incremental and discontinuous innovation...from hosting multiple contradictory structures, processes, and cultures within the same firm" (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996, p. 24).	Incremental innovation and Discontinuous innovation
"It calls for managers who can maintain consistency and encourage continuous improvement in current offerings, while at the same time allowing the flexibility and experimentation that help the firm create or respond to radical shifts in the environment" (Tushman, 1997, p. 17).	Continuous Improvement and Experimentation
"...Successful organizations in a dynamic environment are ambidextrous—aligned and efficient in their management of today's business demands, while also adaptive enough to changes in the environment that they will still be around tomorrow" (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004, p. 209).	Alignment and Adaptation
"Winners in the global marketplace have been firms that can demonstrate timely responsiveness and rapid and flexible product innovation, coupled with the management capability to effectively coordinate and redeploy internal and external competences" (Teece et al., 1997, p. 515).	Competencies and Capabilities
"To be ambidextrous, organizations have to reconcile internal tensions and conflicting demands in their task environments" (Raisch and Birkinshaw 2008, p. 375).	Internal and Environment
"Ambidexterity, the ability of humans to use both hands with equal skill, as a metaphor for firms that pursue a high degree of both exploration and exploitation". (Cao et al., 2010, p. 1272)	Exploration and Exploitation
"Ambidextrous organizations coordinate the development of exploratory and exploitative innovation in organizational units and successfully respond to multiple environmental conditions" (Jansen et al., 2006, p. 2).	Exploratory innovation and Exploitative innovation
"...Ambidextrous organizations—companies capable of achieving efficiency in their existing business while at the same time having the strategic foresight to innovate and explore new businesses" (Marchides and Chu, 2006, p. 2).	Innovation and Efficiency
"The basic problem confronting an organization is to engage in sufficient exploitation to ensure its current viability and, at the same time, to devote enough energy to exploration to ensure its future viability" (Levinthal and March, 1993, p. 105).	Current viability and Future viability

...Table 1.2. Continued

Definition	Tensions
"The notion of balance between exploitation and exploration, or between incremental and radical organisational change, has been a consistent theme across several approaches to research in organisational adaptation" (Benner and Tushman, 2003, p. 238).	Incremental and Radical organisational change
"Today's business environment poses a significant challenge to many firms, namely to continuously innovate, combining operational excellence with both steady state and discontinuous innovation" (Magnusson and Martini, 2008, p. 1).	Operational excellence and Continuous innovation
"We advocate ambidexterity as a viable solution to systems development organizations attempting to harness the benefits of both agile and traditional development" (Vinekar et al., 2006, p. 31).	Agile and Traditional systems development
"Exploration defines firm behavior characterized by variance-increasing activities, search, discovery, experimentation, risk taking and innovation, whereas <i>exploitation</i> is characterized by variance decreasing, disciplined problem solving, refinement, implementation, efficiency, production, and selection" (Halevi et al., 2015, p. 3).	Problem solving and Risk taking
"Companies capable of achieving efficiency in their existing business while at the same time having the strategic foresight to innovate and explore new businesses" (Markides and Chu, 2008, p. 2).	Existing business and New business
"This process encourages the management team to explore new possibilities (markets, competencies, and opportunities) for innovation without impinging on the exploitation of existing products" (Halevi et al., 2015, p. 4).	New possibilities and Existing products

Jansen et al. (2008) found that achieving organisational ambidexterity by combining exploitation and exploration activities “leads to the presence of multiple and often conflicting goals” (p. 982). This indicates that organisational ambidexterity is difficult to achieve in practice. But once successful, organisational ambidexterity contributes positively to organisation performance in dimensions such as revenue, profit, customer satisfaction and new product development (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; He and Wong, 2004; Lubatkin et al., 2006; Sarkees and Hlland, 2009). Additionally organisations are more likely to succeed at organisational ambidexterity if they operate in dynamic environments (O’Reilly and Tushman, 2013; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004).

The idea that “multiple contradictory structures, processes and cultures within the same organisation” leads to long-term organisational survival has captivated many scholars (Tushman and O’Reilly, 2013; 1996, p. 24). The increasing volume of published research dedicated to reviews of organisational ambidexterity research plays testament to this (O’Reilly and Tushman, 2013; Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013; Junni et al., 2013; Turner et al., 2013). The foundation of organisational ambidexterity is premised on the idea that the organisation’s strategies and environment gives rise to the organisational form (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; O’Reilly and Tushman, 2013). Discussions about organisational form have resulted in a debate on the approach required to implement organisational ambidexterity.

Following on from work by Duncan in 1976, Tushman and O’Reilly (1996) first proposed that a way to manage the dual requirements of exploration and exploitation is by means of structural ambidexterity to physically separate exploration and exploitation efforts in alignment with the organisation’s strategy. This separation required the creation of distinct functional business units, each with a separate alignment of people, processes and cultures (Tushman and O’Reilly, 1996). Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) proposed an alternate configuration with more flexible systems and structures. They contend that contextual ambidexterity enables a greater degree of time management and choice of activities among individuals. This is because individuals divide their time between exploration and exploitation initiatives (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004).

Since the pioneering work of Tushman and O’Reilly (1996) and Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) research has primarily been premised on the notion that

organisations address the demands of exploitation and exploration by implementing either structural or contextual ambidexterity. Smets et al. (2012) caution that structural and contextual ambidexterity cannot adequately explain ambidexterity in organisations with complex structures in terms of where and how integration occurs. They propose that different logics can coexist by allowing individuals to create that balance. Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) similarly found that flexibility arising from contextual ambidexterity is dependent on greater intervention by management and greater focus on the individual.

Organisations are complex institutions, and complexity arises when seemingly incompatible logics compete for the organisation's limited resources. It explains why organisations may find it difficult to implement both structural and contextual ambidexterity. This is because it is costly to do so and that each approach requires different strategic goals, structures, management cultures and risk levels competing for the same limited resources (Markides and Chu, 2009; He and Wong, 2004). It also explains why organisational ambidexterity remains predominantly a theoretical subject not easily transformed into practice.

This research considers that a balance between competing exploration and exploitation logics is not created by the organisation's approach to ambidexterity (structural or contextual) but is inherent in the individuals themselves and in the behaviours of individuals acting within the organisation's environment. Recent research by Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) found that scholars have very little understanding of how this balance is created, or what individuals do to enact competing logics. They argue that: "ambidexterity scholars struggle to suggest practical solutions to the puzzle of integrating contradictory prescriptions" (p. 41).

Although some scholars have proposed that an alternate way of reducing the tensions inherent in complex structures is by sequential ambidexterity - managing exploitation and exploration sequentially (Boumgarden et al., 2012). However, an argument to this proposition is that this negates the idea of ambidexterity, being "dextrous with both hands" (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2013, p. 41).

However structural and contextual ambidexterity are not without criticism. For example O'Reilly and Tushman (2013) argue that contextual ambidexterity (where individuals choose how they divide their time) does not fully articulate which organisational systems and processes facilitate the individuals' contributions to

organisational ambidexterity. While Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) have argued that structural ambidexterity could lead to isolation and a failure to link organisational goals with other business units.

Turner and colleagues (2013) found that although multinationals have implemented ambidexterity, they have not capitalised on its benefits, as it is theoretically and practically difficult to balance the simultaneous requirements of exploration and exploitation within a single organisation. Therefore resolving the tensions of competing logics is less about selecting the preferred mode of enablement (structural, contextual or sequential ambidexterity) but about understanding the microelements that underpins organisational ambidexterity. More specifically it is about exploring these microelements to understand the context within which it operates and how these are used to strategise about organisational ambidexterity.

De Clerq and colleagues (2013) advise that a need to study causal processes supersedes studying the mode of enabling ambidexterity. They propose that a study of the relationship between ambidexterity, organisation performance, and intra-organisational contingencies may reveal antecedents and performance enablers of ambidexterity. Organisational ambidexterity scholars have thus far focused research on the independent macro elements of ambidexterity: process, structures and systems (Kauppila and Tempelaar, 2016) and macro level actions by management (Gibson and Birkinshaw, et al., 2004) with limited focus on its microfoundations. Previous research has looked at these micro-macro elements independently while ignoring the greater implications of the interconnected nature of constructs that give rise to ambidexterity. A more topic specific literature review is included in each research paper.

Thus, extant studies, lend themselves to understanding the internal environment of the organisation and the internal organisational systems and processes. But little evidence points to linking these. Furthermore, understanding the organisational environment and the organisational context in which microfoundations occur may contribute to the existing body of research. To understand organisational ambidexterity in practice calls for unpacking the microfoundations that underpins it by using a strategy as practice lens.

1.2.2 Microfoundations

Over the past 10 years scholars have questioned what the microfoundations of organisations are but little consensus has been reached (Barney and Felin, 2013). Empirical work on microfoundations remains scarce (Foss and Pedersen, 2014) but Foss and Lindenberg (2013) note a shift in microfoundations research from its theoretical foundation to an applications basis. Microfoundations are central to this research because they provides an account of the mechanisms at the individual actor level that work to create the structural and causal properties observed at the macro level (Little, 1996).

What is evident is that although the individual remains the micro element in microfoundations literature they cannot be considered singularly. Felin et al. (2015) propose that microfoundations can be viewed in terms of reduction – namely explaining a phenomenon in terms of its constituent parts. Silberstein (2002) simplifies reduction by explaining that that it can be subdivided into “parts and wholes; properties; events / processes; and causal properties”. As the sum of the constituent parts, “the collective level phenomenon should be sought at the level of structure, behaviour and laws of its component parts plus their relations” (Silberstein, 2002, p. 81). This supports an explanation by Devinney (2013) that microfoundations should be considered as a collective, but not only the aggregation of factors to the strategic level of the organisation but as the interaction across and between multilevel factors (Devinney, 2013). As proposed by Devinney (2013) microfoundations occur across and between the different levels of analysis.

Much of the research to date has considered the organisational structures, tools, leadership and increasingly the individuals (albeit at the management level of the organisation’s hierarchy), independently. The focus of these elements separately could be considered reductionist if not aggregated to the collective level (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Increasingly scholars have called upon microfoundations literature to link micro and macro levels through practices and to separate macro structures from micro level activities to view the interplay between these (Turner et al., 2015; Eisenhardt et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006).

Although some scholars most notably Barney and Felin (2013) argue for the aggregation of individual factors to a collective level, others caution against a

“microfoundation delusion”: the unsuccessful linkage between microfoundations and the macro level (Winter, 2013) without considering the environment in which it occurs. This research considers the aggregation of microfoundations where individual factors are aggregated to the collective for strategic outcomes.

Turner et al. (2015) in their inaugural study on the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity identified five managerial actions: buffering, gap-filling, integration, role expansion and tone-setting as key microfoundational practices used to manage ambidexterity. Notably, the individual actors utilised a complex set of resources to support those managerial actions. Their reference to the “interconnection between space – resources – patterns-of-action” and the use of “mechanistic tools and processes” indicates more than just the behavioural view of microfoundations and supports links between the individual level actors, praxis and organisational practices to achieve strategic outcomes (p. 30).

Consequently, Devinney (2013, p. 82) offers a better way to view questions on microfoundations, namely to consider it in relation to what goes on both between and across the different levels of analysis. This is of significance to research on organisational ambidexterity as much of the current literature is centred on “what” ambidexterity is, its enablers, antecedents and management. Microfoundations motivate scholars to look at the links between different levels of analysis and delve into the various conclusions drawn from these relations (Devinney, 2013).

By viewing microfoundations through a strategy as practice lens, it offers a framework to develop a multilevel model of practice-driven microfoundations that emerges from actions in everyday work. These actions are consolidated within the organisational environment, and transcend to the practice level of the organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2005). As Smets et al. (2012) reflect: it is the everyday, mundane activities of individuals that have impetus at the organisational level which gives rise to institutional change. They boast the first research accounting for the multilevel interplay between institutional logics of the organisation and micro level practice. Despite this, very little research is available on the interplay between micro activities and the macro social environment within which it operates.

Kozlowski and Klein (2000) state that essentially multilevel studies are designed to bridge micro and macro perspectives. Foss and Pedersen (2014, p. 6) substantiates the need for undertaking a multilevel study by advocating that:

“empirical microfoundational work requires data sampling on at least two levels”. Thus seeking causal mechanisms of strategic outcomes invites an understanding of the microelements that underpins it. Kozlowski and Klein (2000, p. 8) found that the purpose of a multilevel focus is primarily concerned with identifying “principles” to better understand microfoundations across different levels of the organisation.

Multilevel studies have been significant in linking the micro-macro divide. For example research by Hambrick and Mason (1984) identified causal links justifying psychological characteristics of decision makers producing organisational outcomes. Likewise Jansen et al. (2008) found that the behaviour of top management teams moderated the relationship between team attributes such as social integration and organisational ambidexterity.

Although theory assumes that individuals are always and everywhere in the frame (Foss and Lindenberg, 2013), individuals pursue their own interests. These individual interests cannot be considered independently without linking individual level actions to strategic level outcomes. When referring to the microfoundations of dynamic capabilities, Teece (2007) linked individual level discourse (distinct skills) to organisational and strategic levels which he calls “enterprise-level sensing” through processes, procedures, organisational structures, decisions, rules and disciplines. O’Reilly and Tushman (2011, p. 8) postulated that: “to be practically useful, what is needed is greater insight into the specific micro elements required for a manager to implement and operate an ambidextrous strategy”. It is a call that has been echoed by Turner et al. (2013) for further research on micro level analysis in practice. Although these scholars have called for micro level analysis, microfoundations is intended as a catalyst for strategic level explanations. Microfoundations is therefore a way of connecting. Thus to understand how the organisation strategises about organisational ambidexterity, the need exists to understand the microfoundations that underpin it.

Without discounting the importance of individuals, Greve (2013) cautions against reducing microfoundations discourse to that of individual actors, thereby limiting it to one paradigm. For example he says that individual agency cannot be viewed at the individual level of analysis because the actor is bounded rational but agency gets its “explanatory power by taking the environment as the preferred level of analysis” (p. 104). His reasoning is based on the understanding of microfoundations as a behavioural strategy. This echoes a concern in strategy as

practice literature, that research based on the individual level of analysis is not generalisable (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Taking these concerns into consideration, the unit of analysis adopted in this research is situated at the *praxis* level, which considers the behaviour of the *practitioner* while taking into consideration the organisation's *practices*. Praxis, as the unit of analysis, allows the organisation to balance the tensions of competing logics. In other words the microfoundations will explain what organisational ambidexterity looks like in practice while strategising about organisational ambidexterity will explain how the organisation goes about enabling it.

1.2.3 Strategy as Practice

Strategy as practice is the theoretical lens through which the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity is viewed. It enables the segmentation of microfoundations into constituent parts using Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioner's framework. To understand how the successful application of organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice, it necessitates understanding how inter-related behaviours and individual decisions contribute to its enablement. Thus this empirical research investigates how organisational ambidexterity is shaped. It aims to refocus the attention on ambidexterity in practice where strategising about ambidexterity occurs by interlinking the individual, organisational and strategic levels.

Practice-based investigations of organisations are increasingly gaining popularity because of its ability to understand organisations in terms of how individuals' actions influence, and is influenced by organisational practices and their social environment (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). Therefore the emphasis is not on the individuals alone, but their actions and interactions as well as the practices at their disposal within the organisation that they work in. Thus strategy as practice represents the different points from which the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity can be viewed. The dynamics of the interactions between individuals, their environment and the resources available to them may provide patterns of actions that may shed light on the behaviours, actions and motivations of individuals. Research has found that practices are not rigid because their interconnectedness is dependent on the way they are used by individuals and the purpose it is intended for (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Orlikowski, 1996).

The framework (Figure 1.1) is informed by Whittington's (2002) seminal work isolating three elements of practice theory: praxis, practices and practitioners and is conceptualised in a model by Jarzabkowski (2005). However the framework used in this research is not an entirely faithful representation of their work. Rather, it is an amalgamation of both and in addition it draws on additional work by Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) who identified strategising as being at the nexus of praxis, practices and practitioners. The framework also incorporates the organisation's microfoundations as the interconnection between the core focal points leading to strategising about organisational ambidexterity.

It remains the task of scholars studying practice to uncover those routine seemingly insignificant practices that shape the social environment because it is within the scope of the environment that theory is transformed into practice. Therefore an empirical approach to studying practices is an essential part of understanding the everyday activity of formulating strategic direction and enabling actions to achieve it.

Figure 1.1. Praxis, Practices and Practitioner Framework



Source: Adapted from Whittington (2006)

Firstly the framework investigates the relationship between praxis - the chain of events between micro and macro contexts (Whittington, 2002) and practices. These focal points reflect the institutionalised practices that mediate the relationship between the resources already at the organisation's disposal and its environment. Secondly the framework represents the relationship between praxis - where

operations and action meets (Sztompka, 1991, p. 96) and the practitioner (the individual actor). These focal points represent “the whole of human interaction” (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249) to reflect the relationship between the individual actors and organisational context within which they operate while undertaking strategic activities (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Thirdly, the framework represents the relationship between individual actors and the tools and resources at their disposal. The dynamics of the interactions between individuals and the resources available to them may provide patterns of action that may shed light on the behaviours, cognition and motivations of individuals.

Thus the framework represents the sum total of activity in the organisation reflecting how organisational ambidexterity may be transposed from a theoretical construct to practical application. It presents a broad view of the organisation that considers how actions, behaviours and cognition in one focal point affects and is affected by other focal points within the organisation. Strategising about organisational ambidexterity should be seen to occur across and throughout the organisation as a result of the interdependencies of various micro elements.

1.2.3.1 Praxis

Praxis concerns the actual work of strategy practitioners, in the act of completing and replicating their work. It reflects the environment within which the organisation’s practices occur. Praxis points to the routines and work of practitioners as they engage in everyday life (Whittington (2002). Jarzabkowski (2005, p. 7-8) offers a different view of praxis within the strategy as practice literature as: “a flow of organisational activity that incorporates content and process, intent and emergence, thinking and acting and so on as reciprocal, intertwined and frequently indistinguishable parts of a whole when they are observed at close range”. It is because of this that praxis is taken to reflect the organisational context that shapes the way in which practitioners do their work.

Praxis is more than just studying the relationship between phenomena to establish the ‘flow’ of strategy, it aims to delve deeper to understand how the separation between acting and thinking, process and content, consideration of becoming vs. intent brings about the continuous shaping of practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The concept of praxis can be interpreted in many ways (see Table 1.3. p. 28)

but a pervading thread remains an acknowledgement of the context within which individuals utilise the resources already at their disposal to do their work (Whittington, 2002, 2003).

Samra-Fredricks (2003, p. 168) considered the “lived experiences” of individuals as ‘moments’ in time while examining their actions. Praxis therefore ties practices to the individuals performing them to a given time, period, exercise or activity. As a consequence praxis depends on the skilled activity of the individual (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). If, as Vaara and Whittington (2012, p. 292) contend praxis enables and constrains individual actors, by investigating it, a picture will emerge about how individual actors strategise about organisational ambidexterity. Until then Whittington’s (2003, p. 122) assertion could be extended more generally to: We “know very little about how to do strategising.”

Table 1.3. Different Interpretations of Praxis

Interpretation of Praxis	Scholars
“Whole of human action”	Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249
Nexus of happenings in society and what people do	Sztompka, 1991
“Interconnection between the actions of different, dispersed individuals and groups and those socially, politically and economically embedded institutions within which individuals act and to which they contribute.”	Jarzabkowski et al., 2007, p. 9
Workflow	Whittington, 2002
The activity involved in strategy making, for example, in strategic planning processes or meetings.	Vaara and Whittington, 2012, p. 290
The performance nature of practices	Vaara and Whittington, 2012, p. 298
Intertwined flow of work or activities involved in strategy making	Whittington (2003, 2006)

Studies have indicated the complex, flexible and abstract nature of praxis as not only an analytic tool but as behavioural, social and material constructs (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Denis et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006; Reckwitz, 2002). It is not a rigid structure but

its fluid nature ensures it is malleable in the hands of the individuals embracing it and it is therefore adaptable to the flow of interaction within the organisation. These properties best explain how the microfoundations underpin the nexus between activities in a given environment and what individuals do. Therefore praxis enables adaption. It considers the social environment of the organisation. Thus the organisation's social context is inextricably linked to the individuals within the organisation while fundamentally consisting of multiple, complimentary and competing practices. An investigation of praxis will shed light on those micro elements that may pass unnoticed independently yet collectively are of critical importance to the way in which the organisation strategises about organisational ambidexterity.

1.2.3.2 Practices

The second focal point of strategy as practice concerns practices, which are: "those tools and artefacts that people use in doing strategy work" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 8; Whittington, 2002, 2003). These practices include the individual tools, resources and material artefacts as well as social-material, social or discursive practices. Jarzabkowski (2005) characterises these practices as either: administrative, discursive or episodic. The administrative practices are planning, organising and controlling mechanisms such as budgets, forecasts and performance (Jarzabkowski, 2005) aimed at organising or co-ordinating the strategy. These administrative practices have more practical relevance to management than to scholars. However they are valued as the means of achieving strategic ends (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Discursive practices provide the means with which to interact about strategy, Jarzabkowski (2005) refers to these as linguistic, cognitive and symbolic resources. Because the language of strategists mediates strategy, this has a consequential impact on the practice of strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Episodic practices, on the other hand, create opportunities for individuals to exercise strategy by means of meetings, workshops and away days. Orlikowski (2000) contend that these practices in themselves are not as significant as considering them as mediators between individuals and their shaping of strategy.

It is important to understand the strategising practices available to individuals because these reflect the methods, tools, and procedures used when individuals strategise about organisational ambidexterity within an organisational environment

(Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2007). The strategising effort reflects individuals' ability to use, adapt and manipulate available resources (Jarzabkowski, 2003) to enable ambidexterity. The list of practices provided in Table 1.4 is not a complete list but it gives an indication of some of the practices identified in literature.

Investigating practices is essential to this research to understand not only what those practices are that contribute to strategising about organisational ambidexterity but to better understand the resources at the organisation's disposal.

Table 1.4. Types of Practices

Practice	Components	Scholar
Social Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Motivation • Cognition 	Jarzabkowski et al., 2007
Socio-Material Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Meetings • Workshops • Away-days 	Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008
Meeting Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn-taking • Scheduling • Issue Bracketing • Voting 	Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008
Discursive Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematisation, • Rationalisation • Objectification • Reframing • Naturalisation 	Vaara et al., 2004
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioural • Cognitive • Procedural • Physical 	Jarzabkowski et al., 2007
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT Analysis • Porter's 5 Forces 	Jarratt and Stiles, 2010
Material Artefacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint presentations, • Flipcharts 	Kaplan, 2011
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative • Discursive • Episodic 	Jarzabkowski, 2005
Strategy Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Concepts • Techniques 	Whittington, 2002

1.2.3.3 Practitioners

Strategy as practice emanates from the interactions between people – senior management, middle and lower management, consultants, professionals, employees, investors and customers (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Mantere (2005) suggests that although these individual actors may not all be considered strategists, their actions all contribute to the organisation's strategy. This research follows this consideration of the individual, as the third focal point in the praxis, practices and practitioner framework. Practitioners are the skilled and knowledgeable practitioners of strategy, examining how their skill contributes to strategy (Whittington, 2003).

This places emphasis on the social aspects of individuals: how they act, what they do, with whom they interact as well as the impact of their actions (Chia, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2005). Certain characteristics of individuals shape their relationships with senior management and the environment within which they operate. For example Jarzabkowski (2005) intimates that individuals have differing interests and goals that may not align to that of the organisation. Inherent in this description is an assumption of rational choice therefore individual level actions are key components of strategising about organisational ambidexterity. The decisions, motivations and cognition of individuals are seen as key contributors to implementing the organisation's strategic choices and therefore are instrumental in bridging the divide between theory and practice because individuals enable organisational ambidexterity. Whittington (2002) recommends the inclusion of individual actors in management research in an attempt to humanise strategy. Without linking the actions of individuals to the organisation's environment and resources, organisational ambidexterity remains a conceptual strategy and a theoretical construct.

Throughout strategy literature practitioners are referred to by many names (see Table 1.5 on p. 32) and in this research they are seen as all of the individuals that contribute to the organisation's enactment of organisational ambidexterity.

Individuals are social beings, therefore not only are their roles and identity of consequence to the way in which the organisation strategises but it is also contingent on the environment or social system within which they operate. Jarzabkowski (2005) indicates that senior management influences the performance of others by establishing the structures within which they work but once that

structure has been established management cannot alter that strategy. This draws out the theme that senior management may determine either a structural or contextual approach to ambidexterity (see Section 2.2) but individuals enable that strategy because they are willing and able to do so. Ironically these structures bind the actions of senior management however, lower level individuals are able to influence it (Jarzabkowski, 2005). In support of this Mintzerg and McHugh, (1985, p. 162) state that: “To assume that the intentions of the leadership are the intentions of the organisation may not be justified since others can act contrary to these intentions”.

Table 1.5. Interpretations of Practitioners

Types of Practitioners	Scholar
Knowledge Worker	Jarzabkowski (2005)
Individual Actors	Whittington (2003)
Practitioner	Jarzabkowski et al. (2007)
Worker	Whittington (2002)
Role and Identity Actor	Vaara and Whittington (2012)
Practitioner	Whittington (2002)

Individual practitioners shape the way in which the organisation strategises about organisational ambidexterity by who they are, how they act and what practices they call on when executing an action (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Individuals focus on doing those activities that shape the organisational ambidexterity strategy. This requires an understanding of what constitutes ‘doing’. By viewing individuals through a strategy as practice lens, it focuses on those situated practices individuals engage in while performing strategy work (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). The situated practices pertain to the individual's linkages with practices (the tools, resources, behaviours) and the praxis (workflow, environment, interconnected activities) within which they work. By studying the behaviours and cognition of individuals, the individual actors cannot be considered as discrete entities detached from the environment in which they operate, but rather as social beings whose abilities are defined by the practices performed as well as by the environment in which they perform those practices.

These focal points are not viewed as independent constructs but are interconnected with each other. Strategising happens at the nexus of praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) and the interconnections between these focal points highlight the microfoundations that underpins it.

Chia and McKay (2007) propose that strategy as practice research should not focus on the micro level actions of individuals but should instead look at the patterns that emerge from their interactions with their social practice. They propose that strategy practices should be viewed as patterns of actions emerging from habitual activities rather than purposeful action. In other words significance should be placed on what individuals do to enact the organisation's strategy to implement organisational ambidexterity. By looking at the patterns that emerge from interconnected actions and behaviours between practices and praxis, interactions influencing and influenced by the social environment will emerge. By interlinking the individual with behavioural tools and workflows, patterns may emerge providing insight on the influences of strategising about organisational ambidexterity and its influencing tendencies. Exploratory research is undertaken to delve further into these concepts.

1.3 Methodology

The philosophical stance taken in this research is shaped by the researcher's experience of organisational reality where organisational ambidexterity was practiced albeit unconsciously as management was not aware of the term despite practicing it. From this experience questions emerged about what theory indicates should be achieved and what is achieved in practice.

1.3.1 Philosophy

Pragmatism is used as the philosophical framework to understand the practical realities of organisational ambidexterity. Early proponents (Pierce, James, Dewey) saw it as a social endeavour (Biddle and Schafft, 2014) seeking the meaning of knowledge within a social environment or community (Maxcy, 2003). Its central premise is a practice turn, which is central to this research. At its most elementary level, the primary foundation is experience, which is embedded in the world within which individuals exist (Martela, 2015). Martela views experience as an active process of exploration. As Joas (1999) states, human beings exist in the

world by means of action. Thus experience influences perception of the world and in turn, their choice of actions has bearing on future experiences (Martela, 2015).

Pragmatists propose that not all forms of understanding are “of equal value” (Martela, 2015, p. 4). Thus reality is subject to interpretation (James, 1907). Consequently theoretical constructs are judged by its ability to advance the goals and objectives of human beings. In the quest for pragmatic outcomes, pragmatism reflects a suitable framework for guiding actions (Martela, 2015). Thus conclusions reached through pragmatic enquiry are “like maps of the experiential world, they give us tools to interpret it in ways that help us orient ourselves within it” (Martela, 2015, p. 4). Despite divergent views, what remains consistent across schools of pragmatic thought is “the insistence that knowledge emerges from our actual living” (Martela, 2015, p. 6).

A pragmatic approach enables the extraction of transferable concepts and principles (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), which enables the findings that emerge from this research to appeal to an audience across many research domains (Gioia et al., 2013). This is in contrast to a pure interpretivist approach, where scholars have found that the “study of socially constructed structures and processes of others, those structures and processes are necessarily idiosyncratic because they are fashioned and performed by unique individuals acting within unique contexts” (Gioia, et al., 2013, p. 24). Pragmatism is the preferred philosophical stance for this research because it enables the generalisability and equivalence of concepts across various domains (Gioia et al., 2013; Morgeson and Hofmann, 1999). This is particularly relevant to this research because strategy as practice is viewed as the lens through which the microfoundations of ambidexterity is addressed.

Pragmatism is especially beneficial to the study of organisational ambidexterity because it concerns “understanding the dynamic processes and practices of organisational life” (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011, p. 55). A deeper understanding of how organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice requires an investigation into the “life” of the organisation – how ambidexterity is enacted, who enacts it and the processes used. Pragmatism is concerned with the main themes of experience, inquiry, habit and transaction (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011). And it is an investigation into the experience of individuals and the ways in which their activities are influenced by the organisation that brings clarity to the enablement of organisational ambidexterity. It is the interplay between these that inform social

practice and “situations [that] are continuously constructed and reconstructed through experimental and reflexive processes of social engagement” (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011, p.55). Using practical examples to relate their experiences the individuals studied in this research bring clarity to their lived experiences (Samra-Fredericks, 2003). And in so doing illustrate the relevance of pragmatism. Essentially pragmatism is an experience centered philosophy with emphasis on change (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011), whereas realism is a logic centred philosophy that accepts the world as literal and handles it accordingly (Ornstein and Levine, 2003). Organisations are essentially dynamic, they evolve to adapt and grow whereas an acceptance of the status quo may lead to stagnation and regression. Thus where realism or idealism is concerned with preserving the past, pragmatism is concerned with growth, change and shaping the future (Ornstein and Levine, 2003).

Befitting dynamic organisations a pragmatic research enquiry is concerned with knowledge as the product of experience that changes and evolves (Biddle and Schafft, 2014; Dewey, 2009). It is therefore the real life experiences of individuals enacting organisational ambidexterity that will help bridge the divide between theory and practice. Martela (2015) argues that a pragmatic epistemology advocates the usefulness of any way of thinking or doing that leads to pragmatic solutions. The research problems under examination did not only emerge from a literature review but also as pragmatist authors (Martela, 2015; Marcio, 2001) describe as from embedded experience. Thus this scientific inquiry grew from an indeterminate situation resulting in doubt about the practical reality of organisational ambidexterity in organisations as experienced by the researcher. Marcio (2001, p. 103) put it best that doubt: “problematizes one’s current way of explaining one’s life-world”. Thus the research initiated a process “where the inquirer comes up with novel ways of seeing matters that is consistent with the larger context of her experiences and ways of seeing the world” (Martela, 2015, p. 12). The research questions to investigate this enquiry are reflected in Table 1.1 on page 15.

A further reason for the preference of pragmatism as the philosophical foundation of this research is that it seeks “inference to the best explanation” (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010, p. 323-4) of phenomena with an emphasis on research questions over method. This is particularly useful for seeking to understand the microfoundations of ambidexterity with the aim of providing macro level explanations. Herepath (2014, p. 857) argues that: “most studies either focus

merely on micro-level activities or ‘conflate’ the two in a way that renders them analytically inseparable and hence obscures ‘their interplay, one upon the other, at variance through time’”. However pragmatism allows the micro and macro levels to be analysed in their own terms and clarifies the specific mechanisms through which the different levels are linked over time. According to this perspective, the interplay between macro societal structures and micro-level activities reflects the experiential sense of pragmatism that sees the role of science as “one of serving human purposes” (Martela, 2015, p. 16). Therefore “pragmatism can more easily accommodate the existence of multiple theories for the same phenomenon” (Martela, 2015, p. 16).

1.3.2 Research Design

Thus to understand organisational ambidexterity in practice, the general research setting is embedded in the UK Information, Technology and Communications (ITC) sector. Within this sector three case companies are located within the telecommunications sector and three case companies are based in the technology sector (See Table 1.6. on p. 37). The reason for situating the research within these sectors is because these sectors are typically characterised by rapid change and fierce competition requiring a constant need to simultaneously exploit and explore. Because these sectors are associated with sensitive information, confidentiality requirements, and access restrictions, a non-disclosure agreement was signed with the case companies. This in turn influenced the data collection method.

A qualitative research method was adopted throughout this thesis because it lends itself to research when little is known about a phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989). For this reason it was selected as the preferred method to research the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity. Additionally qualitative research is better positioned to answer questions related to causal mechanisms and processes (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2009). In other words it aids answering “how” questions. This is of particular relevance to understand how organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice.

Table 1.6. Case Study Outline

	Chapter 3 Paper 1	Chapter 4 Paper 2	Chapter 5 Paper 3
Sector	UK, Information, Technology and Communications (ITC) Sector		
Number of Interviews	• 30 Interviews	• 47 Interviews	• 47 Interviews
Case Studies	• 4 Case Companies	• 2 Industries	• 6 Case Companies
Case Study Breakdown	<u>Telecommunications</u> • 2 Organisations	<u>Telecommunications</u> • 3 Organisations	<u>Telecommunications</u> • 3 Organisations
	<u>Technology</u> • 2 Organisations	<u>Technology</u> • 3 Organisations	<u>Technology</u> • 3 Organisations

Furthermore, this multilevel research is able to evaluate the relationships, linkages and influences between micro and macro level constructs (Molina-Azorin, 2014). To understand organisational ambidexterity in practice data was collected at multiple levels of the organisation to investigate the lived experiences of individuals. To do this 47 semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals at multiple levels of the organisation to obtain their first-hand account of organisational ambidexterity. A summary of the interview respondents is attached as Appendix C on page 226. Given the restrictions around access respondents were introduced by means of a snowball sampling technique where respondents knew of or recommended additional participants (Rudestam and Newton, 2007).

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, telephonically or via video conferencing. This was done to support the preferred business practice of the case companies. E.g. mobile companies preferred teleconferences and technology companies preferred video conferencing. For a copy of the final interview schedule see Appendix D on page 226. The data collected was recorded, transcribed and coded. It should be noted that the analysis of the data was done three times – for each of the research papers. The initial analysis was done using Nvivo software. This was to ensure that the initial codes emerged from the self-reports of interview respondents (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). Following the initial analysis, a codebook was developed in Nvivo resulting in 198 codes.

Although the method of analysis is outlined in each research paper, the similarity across all three is that the first order coding was based on user centric terms (Gioia et al., 2013). This was especially important to determine the actual experiences of individuals in practice.

1.3.3 Methods Followed For Each Research Paper

The data used in Paper 1 was based on 30 semi-structured interviews with respondents at multiple levels of the organisation. 2 Case study companies reflect the telecoms sector and 2 case companies represent the technology sector. A qualitative approach was undertaken because little is known about the topic under investigation and a better understanding was required (Eisenhardt, 1989). This is particularly relevant to understanding the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity.

In Paper 2, the population sample consisted of 47 interviews across 6 multinationals. For Paper 2, an initial analysis was done using data from 15 interviews. This was to establish if data was available to support the research problem. After this initial analysis proved favourable, a further analysis was undertaken of the complete data set. The interview respondents included 11 specialists, 7 managers, 8 senior managers, 13 heads of department, and 8 directors. 24 respondents were spread across 3 technology organisations and 23 respondents across telecoms organisations.

In Paper 3, semi-structured interviews were continued as the preferred method to ensure continuity in the subsequent data collection. Consequently 17 additional interviews were conducted. Thus data was obtained from all 47 Interviews. A multilevel, case analysis of the UK ITC sector was undertaken to take a strategy as practice view of organisational ambidexterity. Because Paper 2 demonstrated uniform industry dynamics, the 6 case study organisations were consolidated to reflect the UK, ITC sector. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector is an extended term for information and technology organisations emphasising the role of telecommunications both wireless and fixed line as well as data technology. (See Table 1.6. p. 37).

1.4 Overview of Contributions

In essence this research contributes to existing organisational ambidexterity knowledge. It contributes theoretically to literature by examining the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity, its multilevel applications and the causal implications of micro level actions and interactions. It draws on strategy as practice and contributes to organisational ambidexterity literature through the conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006). In doing so it advances knowledge on the interlinkages between these constructs thereby furthering our understanding of what lies at its nexus. The findings advance four important extensions to current thinking on organisational ambidexterity reflected in the three research papers.

Contribution 1 represents the first research paper in Chapter 3. It investigates the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity and introduces a better understanding of the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity. This is important to scholars because we know very little about the microfoundations of ambidexterity. Microfoundations are the “windows to decision-making processes” (Greve, 2013, p. 103). Without an understanding of how or why organisations engage in ambidexterity, we cannot begin to explain how ambidexterity is enabled in practice. Furthermore an understanding of the microfoundations of ambidexterity has value because available literature does not provide managers with the practical tools needed (Felin and Powell, 2016) to successfully enable organisational ambidexterity in practice. A study on the microfoundations of ambidexterity will further our understanding of how organisational ambidexterity is shaped and the consequences of that shaping for individuals as well as the organisation desiring performance benefits. Although the volume of research on ambidexterity has done much to further our knowledge, the available research lacks practical application and benefit (Turner et al., 2013; O’ Reilly and Tushman, 2013). This is significant in that it changes the organisational ambidexterity research focus from a consideration of something the organisation does (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) to something that individuals operating within the organisational system enact using the tools at their disposal.

Contribution 2 represents the second research paper in Chapter 4. It highlights the reciprocal interplay between structure and behaviour. We contribute to current literature by reflecting on the different forms of organising ambidexterity

available to organisations to achieve different organisational outcomes. This is important to scholars because as organisations grow in complexity, a growing need for agility and quick responsiveness requires greater organisational fluidity (Schreyogg and Sydow, 2010) in its structure and management. Thus a diverse range of implementation modes is required to address dualities and thereby enact organisational ambidexterity. In addition, evidence points to a social dimension enabling organisational ambidexterity that includes individual and organisational behaviour. This addresses concerns that we do not effectively understand how management guidance impacts ambidexterity at lower levels of organisation (Halevi et al., 2015).

Contribution 3 represents the last research paper in Chapter 5. It highlights the behavioural, contextual and directional attributes that enable ambidexterity. This furthers our understanding of ambidexterity because scholars have indicated that research has focused on the context in which ambidexterity occurs rather than what individuals do to enact ambidexterity (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2013). It contributes to current literature by advancing the interconnected strategising behaviours (Jarzabkowski, 2009), organisational behaviours and practitioner behaviours that enable ambidexterity. This is significant because current literature lacks an understanding of the emergence of ambidexterity at different hierarchical levels (Jansen et al., 2016). Current literature does not fully address the practices that individuals engage in nor the actions and interactions that enable them to cope in ambidextrous environments (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2013). The research paper advances the idea that individuals assume and take ownership of the organisational goals and pursue it because they link organisational success to their own success. The pursuit of organisational ambidexterity is therefore influenced by physical and mental activities.

Contribution 4 is reflected in Chapter 6, the Discussion Chapter. It reconceptualises traditional notions of exploration and exploitation. The findings advance the blurring of these dualities as opposed to the traditional consideration that these occur on opposite ends of a continuum. The evidence supports the notion that vacillating between exploration and exploitation is influenced by its intended outcome and the organisational context in which organisational ambidexterity occurs.

In each of these contributions it can be observed that organisational ambidexterity reflects a model of reciprocal causation. That is behaviour, agency, cognition, action and interaction shape and is shaped by context and organisational practices (Bandura, 1989).

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis submission is comprised of three independent research papers set out over the following five chapters. See Table 1.1 on p. 15 for an overview of the research papers. Each of these research papers examines organisational ambidexterity in multinational organisations in the telecoms and technology sectors and thereby provides an empirical base for testing the theoretical propositions.

Chapter 2 fully contextualises the three autonomous research papers into one thesis portfolio. In so doing it provides a unifying link across the various studies on organisational ambidexterity.

Chapter 3 reflects the first research paper. It investigates the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity by segmenting organisational ambidexterity into its constituent parts. The research looks at organisational ambidexterity through the lens of strategy as practice because limited research has linked organisational ambidexterity to individuals, their actions or the organisation's environment. This research paper increases our understanding of the little understood microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity by segmenting these into three micro level constructs: resources, activities and systems microfoundations.

Chapter 4 reflects the second research paper. It investigates the forms of organising and the organising behaviours necessary to enable organisational ambidexterity. Given the complexity of dynamic organisations in technology intensive sectors, it is argued that different forms of organising are required to simultaneously innovate and sustain existing revenue streams. Three forms of organising innovative pursuits are proposed alongside current business ventures: external innovation forms, greenfields operations and virtual isolation. This research addresses concerns that literature does not adequately address practical solutions to implementing dualities (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Annexure 1 and 2 included in

this chapter is listed as Annexures because they were not included in the original paper submitted. They are included here for further clarity.

Chapter 5 reflects the third research paper. It takes a strategy as practice approach to investigate micro-macro interlinkages. It contributes to knowledge on organisational ambidexterity by advancing how and why ambidextrous decisions are made as well as the levels at which they occur. This is because research has indicated that individual level actions and interactions produce strategic outcomes. This research advances habitude as a behavioural construct, execution as a contextual mechanism and exchange as a directional construct to facilitate the enablement of organisational ambidexterity. Furthermore, this paper provides explanations of the occurrences at the nexus of these interlinkages. The research addresses a concern to explore in greater detail how the “organisational heritage - i.e., vision, culture, and people development” enabling organisational ambidexterity is shaped (Birkinshaw et al., 2016, p. 55).

Chapter 6 consolidates the discussion sections of the three research papers and draws the Discussion Chapter together. Although each research paper entails a comprehensive discussion section, this chapter aims to synthesize those contributions to draw wider implications of the findings.

Chapter 7 brings this research to its conclusion by offering implications for practice in the form of a managerial framework outlining how organisations may apply organisational ambidexterity in practice. The limitations of this research are discussed and suggestions for future research are offered. The research topic concludes with a personal reflection outlining the origin and selection of the research topic. It demonstrates a fervent passion for organisational ambidexterity research that is relevant and impactful to scholars and practitioners alike. It is envisaged that the research demonstrates a burning desire to bridge the divide between theory and practice in the field of organisational ambidexterity.

CHAPTER 2.

Contextualisation

2.1 Overview: Contextualising The Research

This chapter fully contextualises and integrates the three research papers into one thesis portfolio. As each research paper was written as an independent paper, it is necessary to provide a unified narrative of the research undertaken on organisational ambidexterity. The format of this chapter has been selected as the preferred method to provide linking commentary between the autonomous research papers as opposed to providing commentary before and after each research paper.

It should be noted that each research paper is an independent, separate and self-contained paper and was originally written without reference to the other research papers included in this thesis portfolio. As such some sections such as the literature review may overlap and there may be some duplication of material. Furthermore, because each paper is self-contained, there may appear to be some inconsistencies. For example microfoundations are referred to in Paper 1 and micro elements are mentioned in Paper 3. Thus each research paper is presented independently and this chapter contextualises the research within the topic of organisational ambidexterity.

This thesis portfolio is entitled: Bridging The Divide Between Organisational Ambidexterity Theory And Practice consists of three research papers:

Table 2.1. Research Paper Topics

	Research Paper Title	Research Topic
Paper 1	Organisational Ambidexterity: The Theory, Practice Conundrum	The microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity
Paper 2	Organisational Ambidexterity: Navigating Paradoxical Challenges	Forms of organising organisational ambidexterity and the organising behaviours required
Paper 3	Connecting the Dots Between Practitioners, Practices And Praxis to Enable Organisational Ambidexterity	Strategy as practice interconnections between the micro elements of ambidexterity

2.2 Research Rationale

The unifying thread throughout this thesis portfolio concerns the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity to understand ambidexterity in practice. The overarching interest in pursuing this research topic is because literature lacks clarity about how organisational ambidexterity is achieved in practice (Turner et al., 2013), despite its promise of performance benefit (Jansen et al., 2009). Therefore a starting point is by investigating its microfoundations because limited research is available. This section outlines the individual research topics, the problems investigated, its rationale and the significance of research outcomes.

2.2.1 Paper 1: Organisational Ambidexterity: The Theory Practice Conundrum

The research on the theory practice conundrum is based on the premise that to understand the phenomenon of organisational ambidexterity in practice, we need to segment it into its constituent parts – its microfoundations. Despite the attractiveness of the research topic, we know very little about the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity (Turner et al., 2015). A contributing factor is that organisational ambidexterity is primarily seen as a strategic level construct that research and evidence has failed to link to individual actors, their actions, interactions or the organisation's environment (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Thus segmenting the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity into its constituent parts draws attention to the contributory influence of each part. This segmentation is beneficial to the research topic because it questions our traditional assumptions on how and why organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice. This research extends organisational ambidexterity literature because knowledge of the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity contributes to better decision-making, which in turn influences the actions and interactions of individuals who enact organisational ambidexterity.

2.2.2 Paper 2: Organisational Ambidexterity: Navigating Paradoxical Challenges

The research on navigating paradoxical challenges was undertaken to investigate how organisations adapt to change. Dynamic organisations increasingly need to reconcile the conflicting demands of their existing business and future-focused innovation (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). To demonstrate prompt responsiveness organisations need to engage in exploratory innovation to ensure longevity and growth while exploiting internal competences (Teece et al., 1997). Of continuing interest to scholars is how organisations manage these paradoxes because research has indicated that organisations operating in rapidly changing and dynamic environments constantly need to adapt and change to remain competitive (O'Reilly et al., 2009). To advance organisational ambidexterity literature there is a need to understand how the demands for innovation are met by a pursuit of organisational ambidexterity and how behaviours impact this pursuit. The topic is of interest because we do not effectively understand how management guidance impacts ambidexterity at lower levels of organisation (Halevi et al., 2015). This is to establish if there is a link between how the organisation addresses paradoxes and their ability to adapt to change. Research to further our understanding of the paradoxical challenges faced is required so that we will know more about the formal and informal forms of organising available to dynamic organisations. In addition we will deepen our understanding of what motivates individuals to act and how management can create an environment supportive of ambidexterity.

2.2.3 Paper 3: Connecting the Dots Between Practitioners, Practices and Praxis

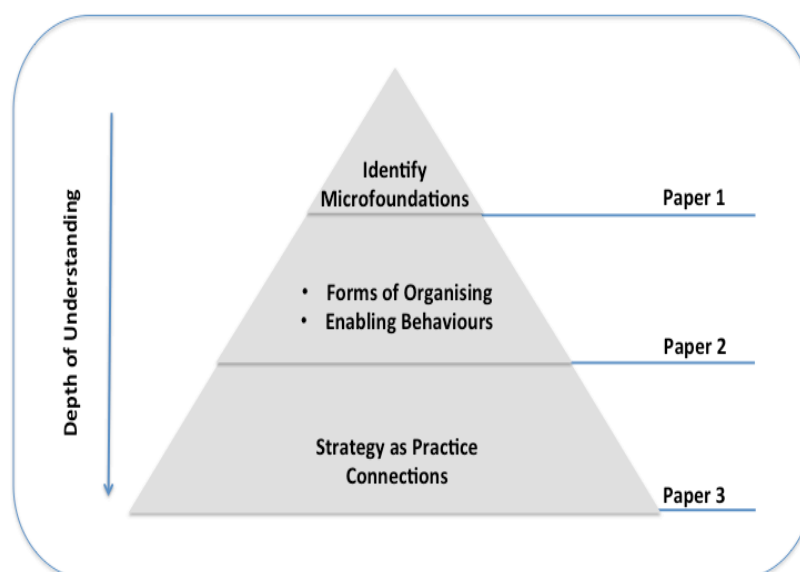
This research connects the dots between practitioners, their practices and the organisational praxis - which encompasses the parameters in which practitioners enact organisational ambidexterity. The research was undertaken using strategy as practice as the lens through which to view ambidexterity. Doing so situates practitioners' decisions and actions in the context it is used in (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). And more so, it involves "studying the micro level while aiming at understanding the macro" (Vaara and Whittington, 2012, p. 325). This study connecting the dots between these micro elements has emerged because there is a

need to understand if the organisation's ability to simultaneously seize and deploy strategic objectives at a macro level is attributable to the micro level behaviours, actions, and motivations. And if so, to understand how these micro elements are connected. This is to establish how individual level actors, their interactions and practices, are fundamentally intertwined to produce strategic level outcomes. Scholarly interest in this topic has emerged because scholars have proposed a "focus on individuals in action and interaction as they develop practical understandings about how to cope" in ambidextrous environments (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2013, p. 54). This concern is addressed by advancing behavioural, contextual and directional attributes enabling ambidexterity. This furthers our understanding of ambidexterity because scholars have indicated that research has focused on the context in which ambidexterity occurs rather than what individuals do to enact ambidexterity (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2013). In so doing we will know more about how and why individuals at all levels of the organisation enable organisational ambidexterity.

2.3 Integrating Research Papers

This section expands on the relationship between concepts highlighted in each research paper (Figure 2.1). Each research paper is approached from a different angle ultimately to bridge the divide between organisational ambidexterity theory and practice.

Figure 2.1. Linking Research Papers



2.3.1 Link between Paper 1 and Paper 2

The outcome of Paper 1 segments organisational ambidexterity into resources, activities and systems microfoundations. The identification of these microfoundations formed the foundation of research in Paper 2. Identifying the segmented individual parts paved the way for understanding how these microfoundations can aid organisations in Paper 2. The microfoundations reflect the various components at the organisation's disposal that are available to manage paradoxes and adapt to change. Identifying the resources clarifies who the individuals are and what they do. The value derived from this illustrates the ways in which individuals and management enact exploratory innovation, how they manage dualities and how conditions are created in which ambidexterity flourishes.

For example Paper 1 identifies microfoundations as the activities that individuals participate in to pursue organisational ambidexterity. It illustrates the use of various practices to determine the organisation's vision, mission and strategy in pursuit of ambidexterity. Paper 2 demonstrates how individuals work toward attaining those goals. Paper 2 advances this idea by delving into why individuals are motivated to enact organisational ambidexterity. A further example to demonstrate the links between research papers shows that the systems microfoundations identified in Paper 1 formed the basis for understanding the conditions, environment and culture in which individuals work. This reflects the context in which organisational ambidexterity is enabled in Paper 2. Paper 2 advances this idea by identifying the role that management has in creating a context conducive to ambidexterity. Paper 2 also demonstrates that although context influences individuals and the practices that they use, these individuals are also instrumental in shaping that context. This is because individuals enact ambidexterity at different levels using the practices at their disposal within the organisational context. The outcome of Paper 2 demonstrates that although each individual component is essential in enabling ambidexterity (as identified in Paper 1), it presents a new way of thinking about how individuals behave and what they use (Paper 2). And consequently they are all connected which formed the basis for Paper 3.

2.3.2 Link between Papers 2 and 3

The findings from Paper 2 highlight two significant concepts advanced in Paper 3: the multilevel nature of individuals whose actions enable organisational ambidexterity; and the occurrences at the intersections of individuals, practices and praxis.

2.3.3 Connecting Papers 1, 2 and 3.

Paper 3 looks at the interconnection between individuals, their practices and the organisational context. Extending the research begun in Paper 1, strategy as practice is used as the lens through which microfoundations research is advanced. In so doing Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioner framework is applied to derive meaning from its interconnections. The interconnection between these micro elements is empirically tested in Paper 3 and the strategy as practice lens is applied to organisational ambidexterity literature because strategy scholars have found that strategic outcomes are dependent on the interaction of practitioners, practices and praxis (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015). In this way the well-documented interlinkages of praxis, practices and practitioners reflected in strategy as practice literature is applied to a new setting in organisational ambidexterity literature.

The interlinkages are relevant to organisational ambidexterity literature because it conveys the ramifications of these interactions to demonstrate what happens at its nexus. For example the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity are independent constructs each with a different purpose and in their own way enable organisational ambidexterity. But by linking these, this research asks more meaningful questions that allow us to exploit a multilevel understanding of the interconnected microfoundations. Table 2.2 (p. 50) illustrates typical questions emerging from these interconnections to demonstrate the value in pursuing this research agenda. Due to word restrictions posed on the submitted paper, these questions are illustrative only as the following section indicates.

Table 2.2. Possible Questions Arising from the Interconnections

Praxis and Practitioner Overlap	Practices and Praxis Overlap	Practitioners and Practices Overlap
How does the organisational context influence practitioners' ability to strategise about ambidexterity?	How does the organisational context shape the available organisational practices?	How do practices influence practitioners?
How do culture, process and structure shape practitioners?	Which actions do practices address?	Which practices help practitioners to strategise about ambidexterity?
How does praxis influence the practitioners' lived experiences and decision-making ability?	How do organisational constraints inhibit practices?	Which practices enable and constrain practitioners' ability to enact ambidexterity?

2.4 Research Objectives and Findings

This section looks at the research questions and findings of each paper and highlights the relationship between these.

2.4.1 Research Aims

Paper 1 looks to understand the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity. To address this concern, the following questions were asked:

RQ. 1. What are the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity?

RQ. 2. How do they contribute to enabling organisational ambidexterity in practice?

Paper 1 identified what these microfoundations are, and how each microfoundation (resources, activities and systems) can be used to enact organisational ambidexterity. The answers to the questions asked in Paper 1 served as a springboard for research in Paper 2. Paper 2 builds on this knowledge of the microfoundations and applies it to organisations managing efficiency and innovation paradoxes. The subsequent paper questions whether knowledge of the

enablers of organisational ambidexterity helps organisations to manage paradoxical challenges. Paper 2 therefore presents an empirical example of the ways in which knowledge of ambidexterity enablers can benefit organisations in practice.

Paper 2 looks at understanding how organisations reconcile innovation and efficiency to ensure long-term viability and growth. Levinthal and March (1993) explain that this is vital to organisations because: “the basic problem confronting an organisation is to engage in sufficient exploitation to ensure its current viability and, at the same time, to devote enough energy to exploration to ensure its future viability” (p. 105). To address how demands for exploratory innovation are met by a pursuit of organisational ambidexterity, the following research problems are explored:

RQ. 1. What are the forms of organising required to resolve paradoxical challenges?

RQ. 2. Which organising behaviours are necessary to manage paradoxes

An outcome of this research emphasised the formal and informal context in which organisational ambidexterity occurs. These reflect the different forms of organising available to the organisation. It also draws attention to the organisational and individual behaviours necessary to enact organisational ambidexterity. These outcomes together with the microfoundations outcomes from Paper 1 indicated a link between individual level factors and organisational level factors. These connections informed the basis of the third study: to understand what those interconnections are.

Paper 3 considers how individual level actors, their interactions and practices, are fundamentally intertwined to produce strategic level outcomes. In doing so it provides causal explanations of the attributes necessary to enable organisational ambidexterity.

While Paper 1 identified the microfoundations and highlighted how each of those microfoundations contribute toward enabling ambidexterity, Paper 3 extends this concept further. It looks at the interlinked nature of practitioners, practices and praxis. It then seeks to understand what happens at the intersections of these microfoundations. To address this, the following questions were asked:

RQ. 1. What interlinkages influence organisational ambidexterity?

RQ. 2. How do these interlinkages shape organisational ambidexterity?

2.4.2 Findings

A common finding to emerge across the three research papers was that virtually no discernible differences could be observed between the case study companies regardless of industry. This was evident across to all 6 case study companies participating in the studies. An important consideration is that all case study companies recognised the value of exploration and exploitation to their long-term organisational success. Another very interesting finding was the overwhelmingly positive views respondents held of their employers. The last common finding across the case organisations was the pride respondents demonstrated in their work. Because respondents were identified by means of a snowball sampling method, one possible explanation for their similar views could be that individuals associated with other respondents of similar temperament and beliefs. One director explained this phenomenon by saying that the individuals who responded to the interviews did so because they thought they could contribute and add value. He intimated that this generally reflected the traits of people employed in his group. An overview of the findings from the respective research papers is outlined below.

Paper 1 illustrates three clusters of microfoundations: resource, activities and systems microfoundations. Resource microfoundations reflected the organisation's employed resources, both individuals in their job roles and managers enabling ambidexterity through managerial actions. Activities microfoundations reflect the actions and practices of resource actors that are influenced not only by what they do but also by business processes, organisational strategy and structures within which they work. The systems microfoundations represents the interaction or system in which individuals work to illustrate how decisions, interactions and influence contribute to enabling ambidexterity. These microfoundations formed the foundation of Paper 2, where we considered how these help organisations manage paradoxes between innovation and efficiency.

In Paper 2 the findings indicate three forms of organising exploratory innovation that organisations engage in while simultaneously sustaining their existing business. These three forms of organising include: external innovation forms, greenfields operations and virtual isolation. External forms are informal partnering arrangements with external start-ups to explore new innovations at minimal risk to the organisation. Greenfields operations reflect small-scale subdivisions of a team or group to focus on innovation. And virtual isolation represents a temporary allocation of time granted to individuals to explore an idea before integrating back into the team. Each of the forms of organising innovation explains how organisations address future-focused innovation without negatively impacting their existing business demands. It identifies how management approaches organisational ambidexterity in fast-paced technology industries that need to swiftly adapt to change. This research also unpicked two sources of organising behaviours: organisational level behaviours reflect how managers meet the needs of individuals while maintaining focus on the organisational objectives to ensure organisational ambidexterity. While individual level behaviours demonstrate key individual capabilities and the individual's willingness to engage in innovation and continuous improvement. Consequently the findings of Paper 1 and Paper 2 illustrate the multilevel enactment of ambidexterity, as well as the different behavioural aspects, which are further advanced in Paper 3.

In Paper 3, evidence points to the interlinkages between the micro elements identified in Paper 1. The findings indicate that the interlinkages produced behavioural, contextual and directional outcomes. The findings further demonstrate the value of habitude by connecting practitioners and practices as being a behavioural construct. Execution results from linking praxis and practices to demonstrate contextual properties enabling organisational ambidexterity. And the contribution of exchange to organisational ambidexterity emerges from linking praxis and practitioners to produce directional properties. These concepts are explained in greater detail in Chapter 5 and on Figure 5.1. p. 152.

Each research paper serves as the foundation for the subsequent research topic. By integrating and contextualising the three research papers, patterns emerge to demonstrate how organisations enact ambidexterity in practice. Together with the theoretical contributions outlined in each research paper, this research demonstrates how organisational ambidexterity bridges the divide between theory and practice. The detailed research papers are presented hereafter.

CHAPTER 3

Organisational Ambidexterity: The Theory Practice Conundrum

This paper was awarded the Tony Beasley Award 2016 in recognition of outstanding work in the form of a quality academic paper developed by a doctoral student. The author wishes to express gratitude to Prof. Albert Jolink and the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable comments.

Abstract

Organisational ambidexterity is an organisation's ability to simultaneously exploit and explore (March, 1991). Its implementation enhances long-term performance, yet despite this promise research lacks clarity on how ambidexterity is achieved in practice. Organisational Ambidexterity is primarily seen as a strategic level construct that research and evidence has failed to link to individual actors, their actions, interactions or the organisation's environment. Strategy as practice is the lens through which this phenomenon is viewed. By relating the findings to praxis, practices and practitioners, organisational ambidexterity is segmented into its microfoundations. This is because individual level actors, their interactions and practices are fundamentally intertwined to produce strategic level outcomes. Four organisations are empirically examined at multiple hierarchical levels, to investigate the lived experiences of practitioners enabling ambidexterity. The little understood microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity are investigated as well as how they are enabled in practice. This research contributes to organisation studies by showing that the synergy between the organisation's microfoundations produces patterns enabling management to optimally use the available resources at their disposal.

Key Words:

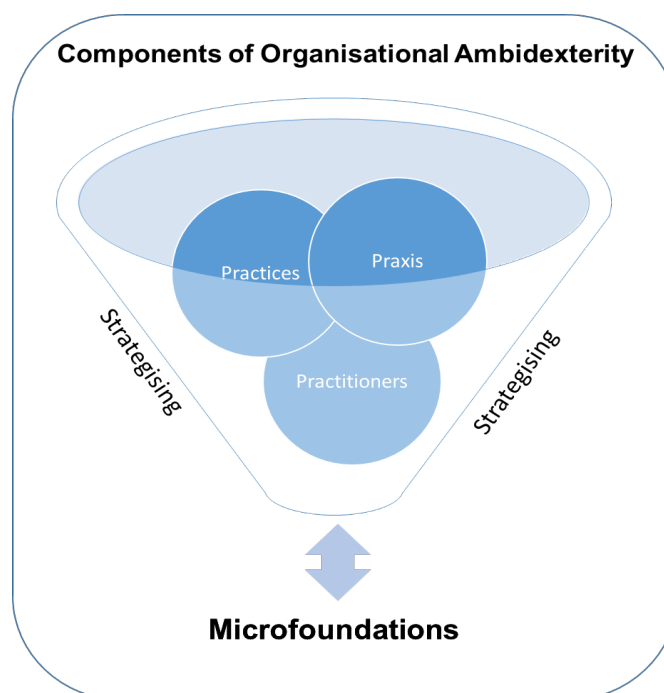
Organisational Ambidexterity, Microfoundations, Strategy as Practice

3.1 Introduction

It is claimed that the organisation's long-term success is dependent on its ability to simultaneously explore new opportunities and exploit current certainties by balancing the tensions between these competing logics (March, 1991). The attractiveness of this research topic is that it promises a range of performance outcomes such as revenue, profit, customer satisfaction, competitive advantage and new product introductions (Jansen et al., 2009). Despite these gains organisations have not capitalised on it (Turner et al., 2013). And more specifically, organisational ambidexterity has by and large been a theoretical exercise not easily transformed into practise (Turner et al., 2013), despite it being: "a topic of immense practical importance and great theoretical opportunity" (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013, p. 19).

To understand organisational ambidexterity in practice necessitates unpacking the microfoundations that underpin it (Figure 3.1). These microfoundations will explain how the individual level factors aggregate to the collective level (Barney and Felin, 2013).

Figure 3.1. Research Model



As we know very little about these microfoundations, a strategy as practice view is considered because it is concerned with detailed aspects of strategising: how practitioners think, behave, act and interact by who they are, what they do, and which tools they use (Jarzabkowski, 2007). For this reason it is useful to start with a conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) as it identifies the organisational context within which organisational ambidexterity is enabled, the practices available to execute it and the practitioners who by their actions and interactions implement organisational ambidexterity. Because organisational ambidexterity has strategic consequences for the organisation, seen as its long-term success or growth potential, strategy as practice is used as the theoretical lens contributing to organisational theory literature. This is because it enables “studying the micro level while aiming at understanding the macro” (Vaara and Whittington, 2012, p. 325). The conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) enables framing the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity in terms of the flow of work enabling ambidexterity, the practices undertaken to implement it and the individuals executing the strategy to simultaneously explore and exploit.

Most organisational ambidexterity research looks at managers when researching individual level considerations (Mom et al., 2015; Good and Michel, 2013). In this research a distinction is drawn: Practitioners are seen as the individuals that do the work regardless of hierarchical level. Such that engineers, managers and heads of department may all be considered practitioners. Where management is referred to, it refers to someone at management-level, or above, who is hierarchically more senior than subordinates and is able to influence subordinate behaviours.

This paper extends our understanding of organisational ambidexterity in practice. In this regard this research speaks to the challenges organisations face in enabling organisational ambidexterity and the resources already at its disposal to enable it. Our understanding of resource microfoundations follows Barney’s (1991) identification of resources as the organisational assets and strengths used by organisations to improve their effectiveness, efficiency and implement their strategies. These resources include labour, capital, time, expertise, management and information. Available organisational resources are an important consideration in the enablement of organisational ambidexterity because research points to

organisational ambidexterity being difficult to achieve in practice because it requires competing resources (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). Based on these considerations, this research aims to shed light on how segmenting the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity contributes to understanding the enablers of organisational ambidexterity. Scholars have indicated that limited research on the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity is available (Turner et al., 2015). These microfoundations are indicative of the constituent parts that underpin organisational ambidexterity. Consequently this topic needs further development because it is by understanding the microfoundations that underpin organisational ambidexterity that we gain a better understanding of how it enabled in practice. Current literature fails to incorporate important aspects of ambidexterity such as why it is difficult to implement in practice (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013), and why strategic level constructs rather than individual level constructs such as individual actions and interactions are linked to ambidexterity (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Thus segmenting the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity into its constituent parts draws attention to the contributory influence of each part in the enablement of organisational ambidexterity in practice.

The patterns emerging from the synergy between the microfoundations of organisation ambidexterity shapes the optimal configuration of resources. It is this knowledge of available resources that is instrumental in formulating patterns to help management address the optimal strategy for that specific organisation (Markides, 2013). The enablement of organisational ambidexterity is therefore context dependent. It is proposed that a symbiotic view of organisational praxis, practices and practitioners draws together micro level actions and interactions that produce strategic level outcomes. This notion of symbiosis draws on the conceptualisation of praxis as the organisational context within which organisational ambidexterity is enabled; the practices available to implement organisational ambidexterity and practitioners are seen as the individuals who enact organisational ambidexterity through their skill and ability (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006).

This study addresses two research questions: (1) what are the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity? And (2) how do they contribute to enabling organisational ambidexterity in practice? To empirically explore these questions this research is situated in the telecoms and technology sectors. These sectors were specifically selected because they reflect the challenges multinationals face operating in rapidly changing and dynamic environments. Organisations in

these sectors must increasingly introduce innovative new products and services, maintain existing activities and must reduce operating costs to remain competitive in saturated markets with shrinking margins. Thus a multilevel analysis linking the microfoundations to strategic outcomes offers a practice view of organisational ambidexterity to bridge the divide between what has predominantly been a theoretical and ontological exercise (Devinney, 2013; Turner et al., 2013) and what is experienced in practice.

This research has implications for both scholars and practice: Scholars will have a better understanding of how organisational ambidexterity is shaped and the consequences of that shaping so as to better understand organisational ambidexterity in practice. And practitioners will derive knowledge patterns on how to use the available skills at their disposal to better implement organisational ambidexterity in practice. Theoretically, the findings suggest that regardless of the mode of adaption or ambidextrous strategy adopted, organisational ambidexterity is enabled by individuals who are willing and able to do so.

The contribution of this research is threefold: Theoretical, methodological and practical. Firstly, we extend existing organisational ambidexterity literature with a strategy as practice lens to unpack a practice-based approach to understanding the microfoundations of ambidexterity. Secondly, the multilevel approach provides empirical evidence of data sampling on at least 2 levels of analysis. And thirdly, we provide empirical evidence of organisational ambidexterity grounded in practice.

3.2 Theoretical Background

3.2.1 Organisational Ambidexterity

Organisational ambidexterity literature arose from a need to explain seemingly disparate logics of exploration and exploitation occurring simultaneously and management's need to manage those competing tensions. In his seminal work March (1991) explains that exploration is characterised by innovation, discovery, experimentation and risk-taking; and exploitation is synonymous with improvement, implementation, execution, efficiency and refinement. However, current studies cannot adequately explain how these competing logics are balanced in complex

structures (Smets et al., 2012). Neither does research explain how this balance is achieved, or what individuals do to implement competing logics (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). While much has been written about what constitutes ambidexterity (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013), very little is available about why it is difficult to achieve in practice (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013). Because of this scholars are increasingly looking at how organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice (Markides, 2013; Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Birkinshaw et al. (2016) propose three different modes of adaption: Structural separation as identified by Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) to physically separate the functions; behavioural integration, as introduced by Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) where individuals enact conflicting activities in the same unit and sequential alternation as the continuous oscillation between exploration and exploitation. Organisations alternate between these modes of adaption depending on external and internal requirements (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). For these to have impact, scholars are increasingly considering the emergence of organisational ambidexterity at lower levels of the organisation (Jansen et al., 2016). Thus the top down, bottom up and horizontal flow of knowledge to aid organisational ambidexterity have gained traction (Mom et al., 2007; Heavey et al., 2015). Equally, ambidexterity scholars have begun to look into its operationalisation by considering behavioural (Birkinshaw et al., 2016) and psychological aspects such as cognition and motivation (Mom et al., 2015). Although practitioners act ambidextrously, we do not have clarity about when and how they act ambidextrously (Mom et al., 2015). Thus segmenting the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity into their constituent parts begins to frame our understanding of what happens in practice.

3.2.2 Microfoundations

The study of microfoundations is essential to link the micro and macro organisational levels (Barney and Felin, 2013). And more specifically microfoundations are essential to understand how individual level factors impact organisations (Felin et al., 2015). Ambidexterity research has been linked to organisational performance (Markides and Chu, 2009; Jansen et al., 2009) but scholars have argued that ambidexterity lacks practical application and benefit (Turner et al., 2013; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; O' Reilly and Tushman, 2013). Consequently this topic needs further development because it is by understanding the microfoundations that underpin organisational ambidexterity that we gain a better understanding of how it enabled in practice. Thus to address the outcomes

associated with ambidexterity such as long-term organisational performance, there is a need to investigate the various components of ambidexterity as well as how they are connected. This is important to our understanding of ambidexterity so as to provide managers with the correct tools to enact ambidexterity in practice (Felin and Powell, 2016).

Much of the available research has taken a macro view of organisational ambidexterity at the strategic level yet the microfoundations that underpins ambidexterity has been largely ignored. Also current literature lacks multiple levels of analysis to explain ambidexterity in practice (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2013).

Microfoundations research is valuable in that it serves as the “windows to decision-making processes” (Greve, 2013, p. 103). It enables understanding the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity within the context of the organisation’s individual actors, the organisational practices and the environment within which it operates. By understanding the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity, we may better understand these independent micro mechanisms. Foss (2010) proposes that microfoundations can be viewed as reductionist in that they explain a phenomenon in terms of its constituent parts. To explain organisational ambidexterity this reduction of its micro elements is key to framing the organisation’s decision-making activities (Greve, 2013).

The foundation of understanding microfoundations research lies in unpacking how individual level factors influence the organisation and how the actions and interactions of practitioners leads to strategic level outcomes as well as how the macro organisational elements brings about micro level actions (Felin et al., 2015). Thus microfoundations are recursive. In this way micro level actions and interactions shape macro level activities and are also shaped by them. It also addresses how the theoretical framing of strategy as practice compliments the microfoundations lens. Strategy as practice is instrumental in managing tensions: “studying the micro level while aiming at understanding the macro” (Vaara and Whittington, 2012, p. 325). Additionally strategy as practice draws on the praxis, practices and practitioner framework by Whittington (2003) to segment the microfoundations into three constituent parts: the individual actors, their actions and the organisational context in which organisational ambidexterity occurs. This segmentation is a beneficial starting point because little is known about these microfoundations.

Microfoundations consider how individual level factors aggregate to the collective level (Barney and Felin, 2013) because individual level actors, their actions and practises have strategic consequences for the firm (Jarzabkowski, 2009). Increasingly scholars have called on microfoundations research to link micro and macro levels through practices to better explain organisational ambidexterity (Turner et al., 2015). Thus microfoundations research requires understanding of not only the individual level of practitioners but also the organisational context (Barney and Felin, 2013) that facilitates organisational ambidexterity. Ultimately, managers are concerned with how lower-level actions and activities affect the performance of the organisation (Devinney, 2013) by looking at causal properties. Additionally microfoundations provide insight into managers' networks and their ability to behave ambidextrously (Rogan and Mors, 2014). In this way organisational ambidexterity can be segmented into the actions and interactions of practitioners (Rogan and Mors, 2014) at different hierarchical levels of the organisation. The actions and interactions of practitioners are indicative of the social capital available to organisations (Turner et al., 2015). Thus understanding the macro-micro conception of the organisation invites a multilevel analysis (Felin et al., 2015).

Microfoundations have a recursive impact on the organisation's strategic achievements. Thus the organisational micro elements influence the organisation's strategy just as the organisational strategy impacts the organisation's microfoundations. As Felin et al. (2015) point out organisational context influences practitioner motivation to the benefit of the organisation. The effect of a multilevel consideration of microfoundations is that individual actions and organisational factors should produce explanations of social outcomes (Felin et al., 2015). Microfoundations reflect a way of thinking, which explains why micro disciplines like psychology and organisational behaviour are significant in explaining the macro management of the organisation (Felin et al., 2015).

3.2.3 Strategy as Practice

Strategy as practice reflects the theoretical framing of this research, which contributes to organisational ambidexterity literature. It is the lens through which the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity is viewed in practice. This is because strategy as practice draws mainly from the sociological theories of practice

(Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Practice theory holds that individual behaviour is contingent upon an interconnected environment where the interlinked activity involved in strategy making depends on the practices of individuals. Strategy as practice concerns the interconnection between praxis, practices and practitioners. Therefore this study involves managing tensions: “studying the micro level while aiming at understanding the macro” Vaara and Whittington (2012, p. 325). Strategy as a situated socially accomplished activity is no longer seen merely as something organisations have; it is concerned with what an organisation and its actors do (Balogun et al., 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Strategy as practice is credited with seeing the interrelatedness of common tensions between: cognition and action, structure and agency, individual and organisational levels (Reckwitz, 2002).

This depicts the segmentation of organisational ambidexterity microfoundations into a conception of praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006). This conceptualisation represents the relationship between praxis - where operations and action meets (Sztompka, 1991), the practitioner - who performs the work, and the institutionalised practices – representing the tools and resources at their disposal. These concepts not only segment microfoundations into these focal points, they highlight the interdependence between them. Therefore the basis for using strategy as practice as the theoretical lens is that it aids understanding: who and what the microfoundations are as well as how they shape organisational ambidexterity and questions why it is difficult to achieve in practice. In so doing it aids understanding the: who, what, why and how of strategising about organisational ambidexterity (Paroutis et al., 2016).

This research investigates organisational ambidexterity through a strategy as practice lens by looking at praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006). This is to segment the research into the microfoundations that serve as focal points to understanding the interrelated phenomena between these constructs. The intent is to derive patterns explaining how these microfoundations contribute to strategising about organisational ambidexterity.

3.2.4 Research Problem and Questions

Previous research has considered the moderators, antecedents and enablers of organisational ambidexterity (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; De Clerq et al., 2013; Hong et al., 2013), as well as its management (Carmeli and Halevi, 2009; Voss and Voss, 2013) and the individuals implementing it (Good and Michel, 2013). However, limited research is available on the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity (Mom et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2015) while none is available on the greater implications of the interconnected nature of constructs that give rise to ambidexterity. Research remains limited in terms of looking at organisational ambidexterity as being something that people do, rather than something the organisation pursues. Organisational ambidexterity research continues to be explored as an organisational level construct (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) linking organisational ambidexterity to the strategic level with limited focus on the individuals whose practical actions and interactions enact strategy (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Unpacking the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity lends itself to understanding the internal environment of the organisation, the individuals enabling organisational ambidexterity and the practices they engage in.

Microfoundations explain the network of causal relations between the individual level and the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity in practice. Therefore the first research question posed is: What are the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity? The second research question seeks the connection between the roles that individuals play, the resources provided by the organisation and the context within which these individuals execute their work, by asking: How do these microfoundations contribute to enabling organisational ambidexterity in practice?

3.2.5 Case Study Context

Technology and telecoms companies are widely considered to be at the forefront of change facing many situations where strategic ambiguity needs to be managed (Markides and Chu, 2009). To maximise sample variation, four case companies across these sectors were selected because of the importance of exploration and exploitation to their long-term success. Both telecoms and

technology organisations are continuously faced with dual challenges of delivering new value propositions and managing the business more efficiently. It is because of these dual responsibilities that these organisations increasingly realise that they lack the capabilities to navigate the change.

Four multinationals were included in the study, with two multinationals representing each sector. The case companies were selected to illustrate how companies in dynamic environments combine seemingly incompatible strategies: continuous improvement and leading edge innovations; cost containment and growth; customer centricity and increasing competition; service excellence and new generation technologies. A second reason for using these case companies was to illustrate whether the implementation of organisational ambidexterity in practice was specific to a particular organisation. Multiple case studies allows for generalising results across organisations or identifying if specific enabling characteristics are organisation specific. A further reason for situating the research in the telecoms and technology sectors is based on the researcher's background and experience. With personal experience at management level in both telecoms and technology companies, the researcher's operational and strategic knowledge informed the research questions asked so that practitioners could relate to them.

The two telecoms firms are represented in five countries. One is the largest across two sectors, while the other is the largest in all their operating countries. However, they differ in their strategic direction: one is focused on cost effectiveness, while the other is focused on being the best in their market. Similarly, the technology companies represent leaders in their respective markets: a global leader that aims to be a leading enabler of technology while the other has a monopoly in each of their five operating countries where they aim to drive innovation. Of primary concern to all of these organisations is innovation and improvement. These companies have been selected to investigate how organisational ambidexterity is enabled regardless of their organisational strategy. Including two different sectors creates sample variation within the population. Scholars have found that in considering the operational approaches of various organisations the necessary variation is provided (Hochwarter et al., 2011; Bedeian et al., 1992). Interviewing individuals at multiple levels of the organisation also creates sample variation. Furthermore asking interview respondents behavioural questions such as relating personal examples also creates variance. Ryan (2006) indicates that by identifying patterns both within and across several accounts delivers sample variation. This is in line with Bergh and

Ketchen's (2011) contention that many strategy scholars have utilised individual behavior to explain variance in organisational outcomes as a result of management decisions.

This reflexive approach, as advanced by Horsburgh (2003), outlines that the research was conducted from the researcher's perspective based on past experience, actions and perspectives. As such, there is an acknowledgement and recognition of this impact on the research question construction, interaction with respondents and subsequent analysis of the data. Thus the context of the researcher's experience impacts the meaning ascribed to the respondent's answers (Gioia et al., 2012; Horsburgh, 2003). However, researchers have argued that to investigate the lived experiences of practitioners requires immersion in their world (Gioia et al., 2012) and that it is impossible to be removed from the subject matter because the researcher is intimately involved in the research, data collection and analysis (Horsburgh, 2003). For this reason, to prevent researcher bias, precautions were taken such as using the respondent's words during the initial coding (Gioia et al., 2012). In addition a fellow PhD student coded two transcripts independently. This independent coding was done to confirm that the codes emerging from the data was user centric and was not clouded by the researcher's preconceived ideas. In this way researcher bias was addressed (Horsburgh, 2013).

3.3 Methods

The lack of research about the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity necessitated an exploratory inductive method allowing findings to emerge from the raw data collected. Depth of knowledge about this phenomenon in practice was acquired by means of thirty semi-structured interviews with specialists, lower, middle and senior managers, as well as senior executives. The interviews averaged 60 minutes to take into consideration the time constraints of the respondents. The cross-section of respondents was to ensure the real-time account of people experiencing the phenomena under investigation (Gioia et al., 2012). This method was adopted to ensure a more complete understanding of the respondents lived experiences and the complexity of implementing exploration and exploitation simultaneously.

The research followed an interview protocol based on literature (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2010; Cresswell, 1998) using the March (1991) definition of organisational ambidexterity as the foundation to establish if the interview respondents engaged in exploratory or exploitative activities. Previous ambidexterity research using both qualitative and quantitative instruments formed the foundation for questions asked (Comez et al., 2011; Jansen, 2005 and Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). See Appendix C on page 226 for the interview protocol data source. Microfoundations research questions were developed from research utilising semi-structured interview instruments (Angwin et al., 2015; Antonacopoulou, 2008; Jarzabkowski, 2005). And strategy as practice questions were developed from previous research (Bloom and Van Reenen 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2004) in the initial protocol. The initial interview protocol is reflected in Appendix B (see page 226). The protocol was further refined during a review with managers to verify the terminology used by interview respondents. As the study evolved over subsequent respondent interviews, questions were refined to address underexplored concepts emerging from the interviews (Gioia et al., 2012). For example changing the question from: “If you were CEO for the day what would you change about the way you pursued organisational ambidexterity?” to “If you could, what would you do differently about pursuing new opportunities or existing priorities?” generated more detailed responses. The final interview schedule is reflected in Appendix D (see page 227).

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using the Gioia et al. (2012) method. This was to establish connections between the raw data to derive theoretical conclusions. The method was to ensure the reliability of the data collected and to address the need for transparency and rigour (Bluhm et al., 2011). A further reason was to ensure the integrity of data and to prevent researcher bias by superimposing the Jarzabkowski (2007) or Whittington (2006) conceptualisations of praxis, practices and practitioners onto the emerging themes. In this way the inductive method was used to understand the complex phenomena of organisational ambidexterity in practice (Angwin et al., 2015).

To capture how respondents enabled exploration and exploitation it was important to ensure that the researcher and practitioner shared a mutual understanding of the terms. For example, the term organisational ambidexterity was unfamiliar to all respondents and the terms exploration and exploitation had various connotations. Therefore respondents were provided with March’s (1991) definition

where exploration refers to innovation, discovery, experimentation and risk-taking; and exploitation implies improvement, implementation, execution, efficiency and refinement. The respondents were asked if they identified with any of those terms and were informed that they should use the terms they most relate to. To capture the actual experience of respondents, examples of successful implementations was requested while the semi-structured nature of questions allowed the researcher to further probe their responses.

3.3.1 Data collection

The primary data collection source was semi-structured interviews, which is consistent with most inductive research (Gioia, 2013; Eisenhardt, 1989). Respondents were introduced using a snowball sampling technique (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). The technique allowed respondents to know or recommend other potential respondents. This was essential as these industries are characterised by sensitive information, non-disclosures, confidentiality, and access restrictions. Therefore the director approved contacting individuals within their division. To obtain multiple perspectives four case companies across two industries were included in the study. In addition respondents in different disciplines (core and non-core functions) were included as well as respondents at different hierarchical levels such as professionals without subordinates, managers and directors. Interviews were conducted via video conferencing or teleconference in accordance with the respondents' preferences. The telecoms and technology respondents preferred to use their organisation's software such as mobile rather landline communication or legacy technology rather than Skype.

All of the respondents were emailed the interview questions beforehand to allow them to reflect on possible examples. However given their time constraints most respondents did not review the questions. Interviews averaged 60 minutes given respondents' time constraints, but all respondents agreed to follow-up interviews if further clarification was required after transcription. In total 30 interviews were conducted. All interviews were recorded and transcribed and respondents were offered a copy of their transcription. Only one respondent requested a copy of the transcription before the follow-up interview was conducted. The interviews resulted in 690 pages (with 1.5 line spacing) of transcriptions. In addition observation data was recorded during each interview to capture immediate impressions, further probe

specific answers, highlight comments or identify matters requiring further investigation. These hand-written field notes were later used to “shape, supplement and confirm theoretical perspectives during analysis” as proposed by Williams and Shepherd (2016, p. 2076).

3.3.2 Data analysis

The data analysis was structured around the method proposed by Gioia et al (2013) and has been successfully employed in recent studies (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Granqvist and Gustaffson 2015; Smets et al., 2014). This method offers various practices resulting in “qualitative rigor” and “comprehensibility” to the qualitative analysis (Suddaby, 2006, p. 637). In following this method, we specifically analysed the data progressing from first order user-centric codes to broader themes. Thereafter we “previewed our major findings to help organise our report and to provide clarity and structure to the reader (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Gioia et al., 1994) despite the fact that the findings emerged from the study itself (Suddaby, 2006). Furthermore insight into the data collected is displayed using representative quotations (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Sonnenshein, 2014) and it offered a dynamic model that integrates the theoretical components of the praxis, practices and practitioner framework (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) as a significant contribution of the paper (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Gioia et al., 2013). Following inductive research examples (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the analysis was iterative and involved repeated comparisons with emerging data. These phases are identified below:

Identifying user-centric or first-order (Gioia, 2012) codes. The data analysis commenced with an open coding approach (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), focusing on keywords reflecting how the organisation engaged in ambidexterity, the implementation of exploratory and exploitative efforts and how ambidexterity decisions were made. During this phase no attempt was made to read into the data and coding was completed using “user-centric” terms (Gioia et al., 2012). Coding was undertaken line-by-line to extract as many first-order codes as possible reflecting the views of respondents. The initial codes covered a broad range of issues ranging from the individual perspectives such as actions taken, collaborations and the sharing of information, to organisational matters such as organisational structure, key business drivers and strategy as well as management

issues such as top-down communication and autonomy given. As the analysis progressed what became evident was that many codes were linked but distinctly different (e.g. exploration, exploration confusion, exploration uncertainty or implementation behaviours necessary, implementation contributions, how it's done, who does implementations, why implementations fail, and implementation decisions). These observations influenced subsequent research interviews to ensure respondents were able to relate their experiences. In this way the analysis followed an iterative process between data collection and coding. The initial coding was done using Nvivo software. Once the codebook was established it became quicker to code subsequent interviews by hand. Following an evolved understanding of initial thinking more codes emerged as the interviews continued which resulted in updating the initial codebook and recoding the data set (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This enabled developing a clearer picture of the way in which respondents and their organisations enabled ambidexterity. In the codebook, each code was provided with a definition to clearly distinguish between codes to provide clear definitions for each code e.g. "low hanging fruit" referred to quick fixes that could immediately bring about change or improvement. This enabled an initial classification of codes.

A further step in the coding process was the inclusion of umbrella terms where the meaning of the process was clear although the respondent did not use the specific term. For example: "praxis" became a reference for examples of workflow (Whittington, 2002), going beyond merely reflecting their environment or references to their physical world (Fairclough, 2003). This enabled an integration of the user-centric terms and an initial interpretation of the raw data. In so doing we ensured data-grounded insights (William and Shepherd, 2016) into the emergence of second-order codes. As the coding progressed the codebook was continuously updated with definitions of the codes to define the parameters of the code for example: "pride and self-esteem" referred to the positive attributes of individuals while "self-belief" reflected the attributes that management expected in their subordinates. Similar to Trevino et al. (2014) this step provided a means to explore differences between codes across the case study organisations. As a means to verify the coding used, a PhD candidate unfamiliar with the objectives of the study was asked to independently code three transcripts. The similarity in coding was sufficient to ensure that the raw data reflected the experiences and realities of respondents engaged in ambidexterity and provided confidence in the analysis.

Aggregating first order codes into second order themes. Once the first-order codes were established, these were refined into second-order coding (Gioia et al., 2012). The initial codes were clustered into higher order codes of related groupings (Straus and Corbin, 1998). This was an iterative process moving between the emerging codes and the data (William and Shepherd, 2016) until all the first order codes were allocated to a second order theme. This process resulted in the integration of 197 first-order codes into 25 second-order themes.

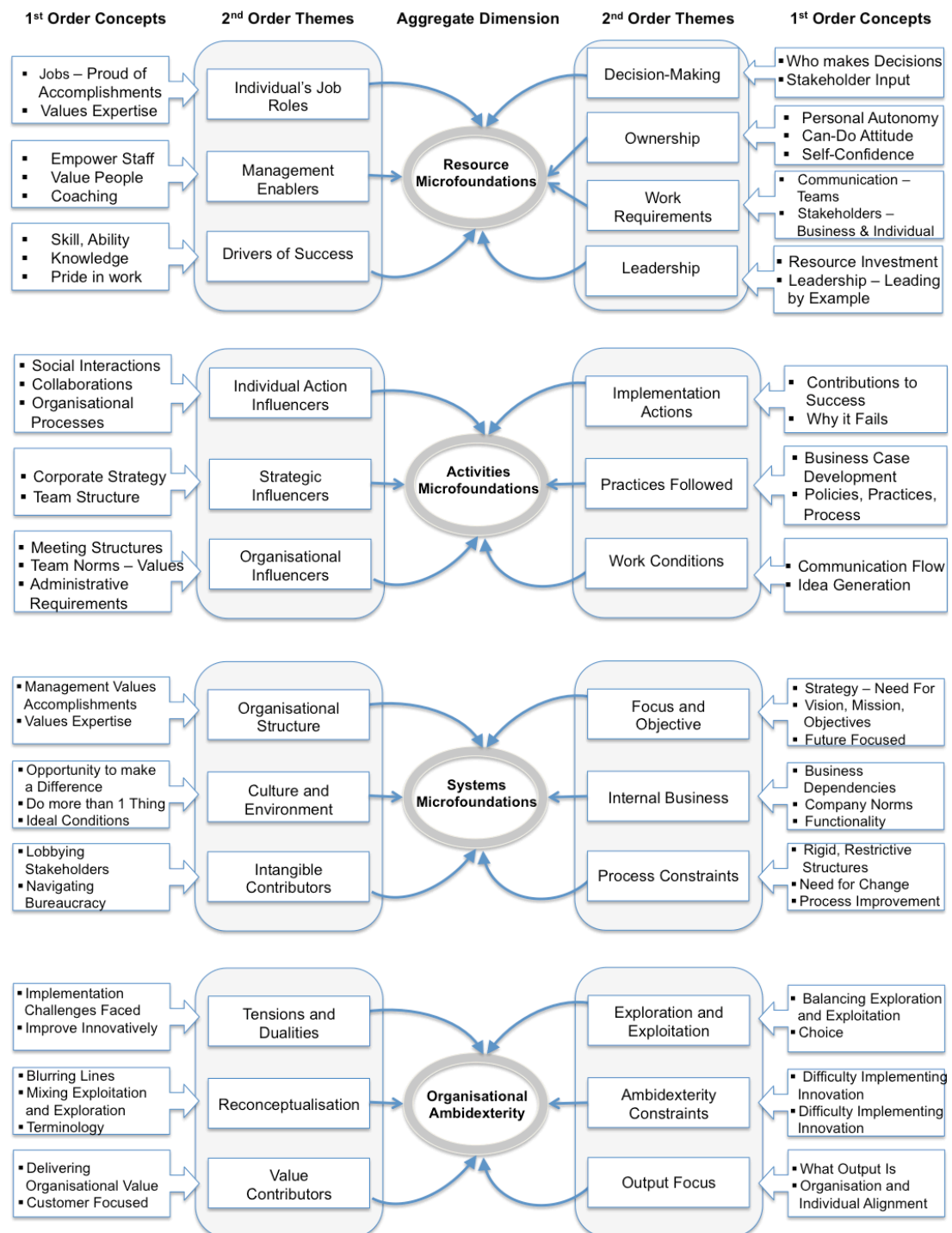
The final stage of the data analysis included the elevation of second-order codes into higher-order theoretical dimensions (William and Shepherd, 2016). This too followed the iterative process between data and emerging dimensions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Following previous inductive research examples (William and Shepherd, 2016; Zimmermann et al., 2015), linkages were sought between themes evolving from theoretical concepts to a dynamic process model (Corbin and Straus, 1990). Four overarching categorisations emerged: resource microfoundations, activities microfoundations, systems microfoundations and practice driven ambidexterity elements. At this point it became evident that the emerging data could be likened to the conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006). Figure 3.2 (page 73) illustrates the data structure that emerged from the iterative data analysis process (Gioia et al. 2012). The figure also provides an illustration of the transformation of raw data and praxis, practices and practitioner framework (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) used to offer different interpretations of similar concepts (consistent William and Shepherd, 2016). The data structure provided is consistent with other studies using data structures (William and Shepherd, 2016; Zimmermann et al., 2015) and highlights the progression of commonly held first-order themes to condensed second-order themes and resulting in the dynamic model. The data structure offers a visual representation of the data progression, which is key to demonstrating qualitative rigor (Gioia et al., 2013).

In following the Gioia et al. (2013) example to ensure qualitative rigor, the research findings are presented in a manner that: “demonstrates the connections among data, the emerging concepts, and the resulting grounded theory” (p. 17). Rigor is demonstrated by showing how the data is linked to the insights derived from the data (Gioia et al., 2013). The systematic progression from first order respondent-centric terms to second order researcher centric concepts reflect how the dual reporting by researcher and respondents demonstrate qualitative rigor through the

links between data and the emergence of a new concept (Gioia et al., 2013) – i.e., how ambidexterity is practiced.

These are discussed in the findings.

Figure 3.2. Data Structure



3.4 Findings

A significant finding when reviewing the emerging themes was that the codes reflected the organisations employed resources, their actions and interactions. The aspects of ambidexterity to emerge from the raw data correspond with the Jarzabkowski (2007) and Whittington (2006) conceptualisations of praxis, practices and practitioners. Four distinctive microfoundations are discussed: resource, activities and system microfoundations as well as aspects of ambidexterity in practice. Resource microfoundations corresponding to practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) reflect the individuals involved in enacting ambidexterity. The actions and activities engaged in to be ambidextrous correspond with practices (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006). The organisational parameters that create an environment where ambidexterity is enabled, corresponds with praxis (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006). The specific ambidexterity findings do not occur in strategy as practice conceptualisations of praxis, practices or practitioners but are relevant to its application in practice. In this way the individual, structural and contextual factors that enable ambidexterity, emerges.

3.4.1 Resource Microfoundations

The resource actors, corresponding with Whittington's (2006) practitioner reference, reflect the individuals in their job roles, the managers and management executing ambidexterity through communication and by managing subordinates as well as the stakeholders who champion projects.

"That is their areas of expertise to tell us, advise us where the market is heading and new innovation, new policies that we should be taking on board and then playing the role of combining the two".

In addition to the skills, knowledge and ability which employees were employed for, a significant part of who these resource actors are is attributable to how they do their work. The attributes contributing to delivering business value lies in their willingness to take risks and their "Can-Do" attitude.

"They want to do it because it's something really good to do".

"Let's take ownership of it".

"Seek forgiveness, not permission".

This is a significant finding as Barney and Felin (2013) indicate that individual level actors, through their actions and interactions are able to bring about strategic level outcomes. They argue (p. 145) that this level of “aggregation is the sine qua non of microfoundations”. It supports the premise that organisational ambidexterity is brought about by the actions of individuals. There is reciprocity between individual actions and the organisation because these are intertwined to produce strategic outcomes. The findings demonstrate that microfoundations were found to be interdependent in practice. They augment each other such that ambidextrous behaviour is always embedded in ambidextrous practices permitted within the organisational context and that the organisational structures are reinforced by practitioner’s actions (Jarzabkowski, 2008). This is consonant with findings by Bandura (1989) that organisational ambidexterity reflects a model of reciprocal causation where individual’s behaviour, agency, cognition, action and interaction shape and is shaped by context and organisational practices.

3.4.2 Activities Microfoundations

The activities, actions and practices of resource actors are influenced not only by what they do but also by the business processes, organisational strategy and structures within which they work. These activities extend beyond tools, rules and resources (Sztompka, 1991). Resource actors are engaged in activities (Table 3.1) within the parameters that the organisation’s environment permits. These activities reflect the environment available to execute organisational ambidexterity.

Table 3.1. Activities Undertaken by Practitioners

Type of Practice	Supporting Quote from Dataset
Administrative, discursive, episodic activities (Jarzabkowski (2005))	“The ‘Heads Of’s’ have a meeting with their Senior Managers and will go down to the team and that information flows down throughout the week. So the stuff that is talked about at the board that’s relevant is disseminated down within a week.”
Material artefacts (PowerPoint, Flip charts) (Kaplan, 2011)	“We’ve got another “Gate and Pass” (process) which says: Analyse your business case, formulate a sourcing plan and then go to NAD which is Negotiation Approval Document.”
Strategy practices (strategy concepts,	“We took our vision, mission, strategy to look at our strategic objectives, look at our strategic initiatives then took that down to

techniques) (Whittington, 2002)	every member of staff of mine to improve our coverage.”
Meeting practices (turn taking, scheduling, issue bracketing, voting) (Jarzabkowski and Siedl 2008)	<p>“We have team meetings where we talk about everything that we’re working on in a particular week”</p> <p>“With many teams it’s usually a kind of walk over and chat to them about something at their desk or phone them up or set up a meeting if it’s a bit more formal.”</p>
Social practices (behaviour, motivation and cognition) (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007)	<p>“What people do must be aligned with their belief systems”</p> <p>“If you put them in a role that doesn’t align with their values and beliefs, you can measure their output till the cows come home but it’s not going to get any better.”</p> <p>“It’s not what you do but how you do it”</p> <p>“We look at it more in terms of the behaviour and values we have rather than any number on a chart.”</p>

The findings provide support for the processes, procedures, organisational structures, decisions, rules and disciplines identified by Teece (2007) when linking the microfoundations of strategic capabilities to the organisational and strategic level of the organisation.

3.4.3 System Microfoundations

The interaction or system, which enables work, indicates how strategy takes place (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). The choice between exploration and exploitation cannot be separated from the context in which it occurs. The findings demonstrate that the system in which ambidexterity occurs is important because ambidexterity does not occur in a vacuum; neither is the decision black and white. Instead ambidexterity is influenced by circumstance, the environment and organisational culture. Respondents indicated that the choice to explore or exploit was influenced by time constraints, the ease or difficulty in doing either, and their ability to get others on board to support either effort. The findings demonstrate that a mere decision alone does not determine what is pursued.

The system in which the respondents worked directed their propensity to veer toward either exploration or exploitation. Respondents described how various enablers and constraints influenced their ability or willingness to exploit or explore. For example time constraints might prevent innovation or senior management

support might embolden individuals to pursue innovation. The system in which ambidexterity occurs is indicative of the interconnected activity that enables strategy making. Here emerging evidence points to the need for “lobbying”, navigating around time constraints and challenges as well as obtaining buy-in and support to get work done.

“Because when you’re under time constraints to get something done you will work around something”.

“The daily grind of everyday life is like moving through treacle and the treacle is pushing you back”.

“Some will come to one of us for a bit of coaching on how to present, maybe even a bit of lobbying”.

These findings provide every indication that organisational ambidexterity can be directly connected to individual level actions, interactions and decisions but these are enabled and constrained by occurrences outside of the practitioner’s control. An organisational context where organisational ambidexterity flourishes is dependent on the supportive intervention of management (Jansen et al., 2016). Although Heavey et al., 2015 found that CEO’s were instrumental in “shaping the opportunity, motivation and ability of executives” (p. 215), this study has found that the pastoral activities cascaded down the organisation created the social capital that practitioners drew positive influence from. The effectiveness and efficiency with which organisational ambidexterity is enabled is attributable to the organisational context available to do work (Mom et al., 2015).

Systems microfoundations highlights the influence of management in shaping context. In this way individual actions at a micro level and the organisation’s context at a macro level together produces social outcomes (Felin et al., 2015). But these factors are interdependent in that individual actions, without an environment to exercise autonomy, may not result in continuously enabling organisational ambidexterity over time. Or the establishment of hard and soft organisational structures enabling organisational ambidexterity requires a mutual personal and organisational goal and objective to work toward that both the organisation and individual believe in and follow. Thus the findings indicate that the enablement of organisational ambidexterity is context dependent.

3.4.4 Ambidexterity in Practice

Indicative of the tensions and duality inherent in achieving organisational ambidexterity, respondents indicated that they faced challenges and constraints when implementing exploitation and exploration.

“Innovation is improvement and improvement is innovation”.

“[We] improve something in an innovative way”.

In some instances there appears little distinction between exploitation and exploration:

“We tend to blur the lines between exploration and exploitation”.

“What we do is we’re mixing exploitation and exploration”.

These findings are indicative of the duality of organisational ambidexterity. Another interesting finding emerging from the data is why organisational ambidexterity may be difficult to achieve in practice. Respondents indicated that the choice between exploration and exploitation is less important than the outcome. Respondents across different hierarchical levels reacted similarly indicating that this perception is regardless of their role or responsibility in the organisation. It also provides an understanding of where strategising occurs.

“It doesn’t matter what we do as long as it brings about change”.

“What we are interested in is delivering customer value, whether it’s by innovation or improvement”.

“When there’s too much innovation, there’s not enough execution”.

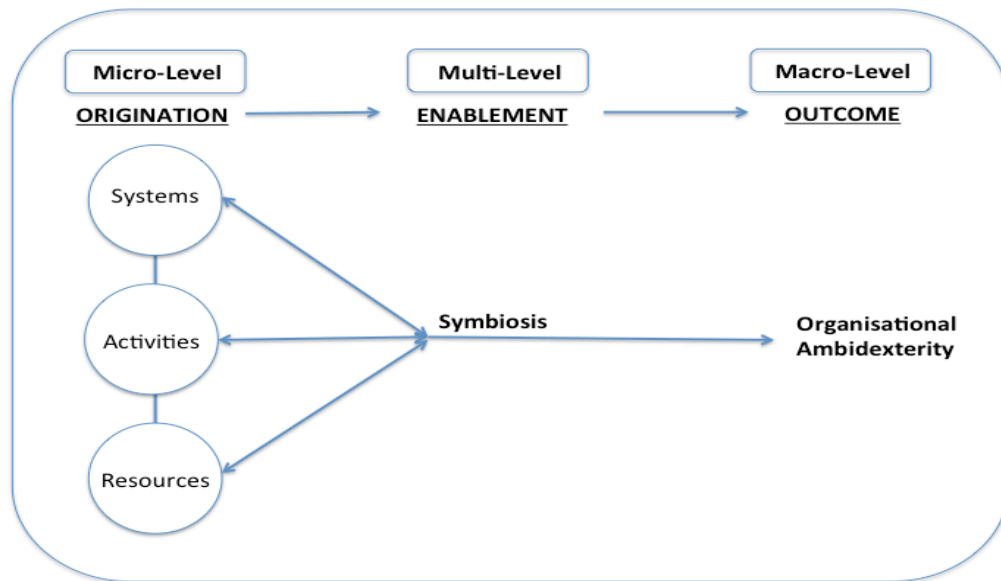
The findings reflect critical management considerations when faced with a choice between exploration and exploitation. One of the considerations is that the ability of practitioners to deliver results, and by extension the organisation, increases with supportive behaviour from the senior management team (Jansen et al., 2016). This finding is also indicative of the discrepancy between academic descriptions and managers’ perceptions of the organisational ambidexterity terminology used. It is also symptomatic of the need for more detailed narratives around the meaning and definitions ascribed to exploitation and exploration. This may bring us closer to understanding organisational ambidexterity in practice. Instead of considering organisational ambidexterity as balancing conflicting concerns, it could be viewed as

the synthesis of polar ends (Papachroni et al., 2015). Although there is recognition of the effect of experience on the motivation of practitioners (Mom et al., 2015), it does not explain the role of management in creating that working environment within which practitioners operate. The findings indicate that in addition to the context within which practitioner's work their belief systems needs to be tied to the belief system of the organisation. This goes toward addressing a concern that we do not have answers explaining why some managers are more ambidextrous than others (Mom et al., 2015), and consequently why some individuals are more ambidextrous than others.

3.5 Discussion

This paper has addressed the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity and considered how they contribute to enabling organisational ambidexterity in practice. Three main formations of microfoundations were found: resource microfoundations are evident by practitioners' willingness and ability to enable organisational ambidexterity. Ability is displayed in their job roles through communication, collaboration and managing subordinates, while willingness is evident by how they exercise their work through their can-do spirit and personal ownership. Activities microfoundations are evident by the practices engaged in using the rules, tools and resources at practitioners' disposal that are influenced by the process, strategy and structure of their work. And thirdly, systems microfoundations are evident in the environment, culture and organisational architecture that enable work to be done and how these shape and are shaped by the organisational context.

Figure 3.3. Conceptual Framework



A conceptual framework (Figure 3.3.), derived from the findings is used to discuss the emerging patterns. Using the conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) as the foundation, this paper puts forward the proposal that by segmenting the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity into their constituent parts we can derive meaning by isolating the independent variables so as to understand the causal relationships between these (Little, 1996) because many organisation level constructs are embedded in individual actions and interactions (Foss and Pederson, 2014).

A practice-based approach demonstrates that practitioners are essential in the formation of strategy and that strategy formation is interwoven with implementation (Jarzabkowski, 2009). Likewise, the findings indicate that organisational ambidexterity is brought about by the actions and interactions of practitioners. This is demonstrated by respondents indicating that being empowered, being self-motivated and self-directed resulted in the respondents using their skills to the benefit of the organisation. Reciprocity is evident between individual actions and the organisation as they are intertwined to produce strategic outcomes. And shifts occur between these where the organisation shapes individual behaviours and individual actions shape organisational context. Shaping organisational ambidexterity through behaviour, knowledge, skill and ability is consequential to the organisation because it involves shaping norms, meaning and experience (Jarzabkowski, 2009). Thus future decisions are rooted in past behaviour (Etalapelto et al., 2013).

Practices reflect the practitioner's world in that these are the objects, activities and the tools that practitioners have made them to be (Orlikowski and Scott, 2015). They matter because the practices engaged in are what the organisational context permits. For example, a more informal organisational structure facilitates greater discursive practices and collaborative efforts between practitioners than a more silo driven organisation. In this way the praxis and practices engaged in shapes the context where organisational ambidexterity is enabled and constrained. The relationship between praxis and practices is that of mutual dependence.

Thus practices and resource-based advantages of the organisation are aligned which helps the organisation adapt to changes in its environment (Bowman and Pavlov, 2014). Vaara and Whittington (2012) found that praxis is not only a reflection of the activity work undertaken but is indicative of how practices are performed. In this way the tools, norms and procedures followed by the organisation to enable organisational ambidexterity cannot be separated from the organisation that employs them or the practitioners that use them. However, despite the availability of practices the way in which they are used differs between organisations (and within organisations) depending on the practitioners and the organisational praxis (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2015; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Practices in action are enabled by the hard and soft organisational structures that permit it. And managers can identify how practitioners' choices, practices and praxis can be constructed in such a way to improve decision-making (Felin et al., 2015). Thus management play a significant role in the compilation of the optimal configuration of resources to reduce inherent conflicts between limited resources (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996) and to balance seemingly competing demands.

Research inspired by agential action work from the premise that action cannot be conceptualised without being materialised (Orlikowski and Scott, 2015). The context, within which work occurs, whether the context is real or perceived, shapes the enablement of organisational ambidexterity. For example, if practitioners feel constrained, whether or not they actually are prohibited from acting influences their decision-making patterns and consequently their ability to enable organisational ambidexterity. The construction of organisational praxis also determines how practitioners navigate the contextual realm to secure their desired objectives. It may mean that certain governance, political and structural erections

are circumvented so that it does not obstruct reaching the desired outcome. In this way management is instrumental in influencing and shaping the context within which practitioners work. Thus the specific and unique context of the organisation (Bowman and Pavlov, 2014) impacts the enablement of organisational ambidexterity. For this reason an element of flexibility in the exercise of organisational ambidexterity is required as the organisation adapts and changes to address the demands of the internal and external environment. This flexibility relates to both the soft structures by bypassing governance and hard structures pertaining to functional structures. The organisation's functional structures enables different teams or functional groups to exercise freedom to adapt their structure to meet the local demands or outcomes they wish to achieve (Markides and Chu, 2009).

This study illustrates a fundamental shift away from organisational ambidexterity as a management construct or organisational strategy to a focus on the symbiosis between context, practitioners and practices that enable organisational ambidexterity. Thus the focus should move from what organisations achieve and where the decision to pursue organisational ambidexterity comes into being to a focus on the microfoundations that enable strategic level outcomes. Or as Bowman and Pavlov (2014) propose a shift from strategy content to a micro focus on resources. Although behavioural factors have a significant impact on the enablement of organisational ambidexterity (Birkinshaw et al., 2016), and the actions of management (Turner et al., 2015), the specific actions of management that enable organisational ambidexterity remain unclear. But as Vaara and Whittington (2015) point out that the individual cannot be separated from the context in which they operate. It is therefore of value to understand the reciprocity between the various microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity.

This reciprocity is a significant element of the conceptual framework outlined in Figure 3.3. (p. 80). It contends that an understanding of the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity requires an appreciation of the resources and activities that comprise it and the system in which it operations but that the one cannot be removed from the other. Individuals cannot be detached from the context within which they operate but are defined by their practices (Vaara and Whittington, 2015). The findings demonstrate that microfoundations were found to be interdependent in practice. They augment each other such that ambidextrous behaviour is always embedded in ambidextrous practices permitted within the organisational context and

that the organisational structures are reinforced by practitioner's actions (Jarzabkowski, 2008).

Additionally the enablement of organisational ambidexterity is more about the synergistic effect (the sum of the parts), rather than attributable to a singular success factor. Thus synchronistic actions, both managers and practitioners, were found to be contributory when successfully shaping the enablement of organisational ambidexterity in practice. The actions of management include shaping the organisational context on a macro level through the mechanisms of "sense-making" to interpret strategic goals so that subordinates buy-in to them as well as navigating organisational politics by lobbying stakeholders and through buffering staff from unnecessary distractions (Turner et al., 2015). Similarly, the contributory influences of practitioners are significant. Practitioners by their motivation, willingness and can-do spirit exercise agency in the enactment of organisational ambidexterity because a positive relationship exists between practitioners' motivation and the efficiency and effectiveness with which the organisation operates (Manzoor, 2011). The processes of practitioner willingness and management intervention mobilise change, working within the context of the organisation and the available practices to enable organisational ambidexterity. Similarly the supportive behaviour of the senior management team favours the enablement of organisational ambidexterity (Jansen et al., 2016).

However the enablement of organisational ambidexterity has another element that scholars have not addressed: how practitioners view organisational ambidexterity. Literature has highlighted the difficulty in implementing organisational ambidexterity because of the duality of constructs (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013; Tushman and O'Reilly, 2013) and because it is a construct preferred by scholars but not acknowledged by practitioners (Turner et al., 2013). Its ambiguity has resulted in blurring the lines between exploration and exploitation, such that innovation becomes improvement and improvement is blurred into innovation. For example, working on a brand new mobile "app" due for release was considered to be innovation by the respondent interviewed, but an iteration of that "app" even though it was not yet released into the market was considered to be an improvement. Likewise an improvement to an existing "app" may result in an innovative approach that produces a new "app". Thus the lines between exploration and exploitation are blurred and practitioners' construction of the terms should be considered in the pursuit of an ambidextrous strategy or the enablement of ambidextrous behaviours.

Figure 3.3 p. 80 brings together the various elements of the conceptual framework derived from a discussion of the findings and the conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioner (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006). It summarises the contributions of this research and identifies areas for future research. The framework highlights both macro and microfoundations in the pursuit of organisational ambidexterity and that a multilevel approach leads to its successful enablement. The micro level indicates the individual actions, behaviours and motivations. Organisational ambidexterity can be directed from the macro level by means of, for example, executive direction but it will not be sustainable long term. Likewise, individual drive and ambition can ensure that organisational ambidexterity is pursued but few individuals have the stamina to continue in the face of adversity. To ensure the long-term performance of the organisation, synergy between organisational context, available practices and individual knowledge, skill and ability is required for successful implementation.

3.6 Limitations and Future Direction

In addition to the insights offered, this research also has certain limitations. The data sampling presented provides in-depth understanding of ambidexterity in telecoms and technology organisations. Despite interviews across four case companies, we recognise that little contrast was found between the case study companies. Greater variance in industry may result in more disparate findings. Thus further study on the activities, systems and resources across different industries may be beneficial to further the research topic. Furthermore, we followed prior research on ambidexterity in multinational organisations. However, the insights based on core and non-core business functions, indicates that the findings may be applied to intra-organisational functions. Greater insights may be available through further research to compare and contrast the enablement of ambidexterity across core and non-core business functions. Given the insights provided on the microfoundations of ambidexterity, we believe that topics for future research may include what drives individuals to act ambidextrously and which practices are more or less successful in enabling organisational ambidexterity.

3.7 Implications And Concluding Remarks

This research contributes to the empirical application of organisational ambidexterity and addresses what the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity are and how it is enabled in practice. The findings explain how organisational ambidexterity is shaped and the consequences of that shaping. The emerging data points to the microfoundations that underpin organisational ambidexterity and the synergy that exists between these microfoundations. This highlights the need to segment organisational ambidexterity into its constituent parts to build knowledge patterns explaining how organisational ambidexterity is implemented in practice. Organisational ambidexterity research is steadily moving away from something that the organisation's leadership directs, namely its strategy, to something individuals at all levels of the organisation operationalise (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013).

The implications for management are a reflection of the findings. Although technology organisations faced the same governance structures as telecoms companies, they were more inclined to circumvent it. This was because their management allowed practitioners greater freedom and flexibility. This is linked to the perceived notion of "core skills" where critical resources were allowed greater freedom to pursue their objectives. Whereas in telecoms many support functions, for example marketing, needed greater adherence to governance structures. Although both sectors indicated the need for governance, it became evident that governance posed more of a constraining rather than enabling influence.

This research makes a threefold contribution to organisational ambidexterity literature: Firstly, this research seeks to extend existing organisational ambidexterity literature with a strategy as practice lens to unpack a practice-based approach to understanding the microfoundations of ambidexterity. The strategy as practice lens to understand the interplay between praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2007; Whittington, 2006) is so as to identify the interactions between the organisations strategy to implement ambidexterity and the wider context underpinning this. More specifically, to interrogate the practice of organisational ambidexterity further to establish its causal properties. Foss and Pedersen (2014, p. 6) propose that microfoundational research is beneficial for interrogating macro level constructs because: "the favoured methodologies in the strategy field are not well

suited for capturing behaviours, interaction and how these give rise to inter and intra-level mechanisms". In support of the microfoundations agenda underpinning strategising about ambidexterity, this research has aimed to integrate existing strategy and organisation studies literature to view organisational ambidexterity through the strategy as practice lens presenting an umbrella framework through which the microfoundations are studied. This research has synthesized the prevailing research to create a framework which best conceptualises the microfoundations within a multilevel organisation setting.

The second contribution offered relates to the research agenda. Much of the organisational ambidexterity research completed to date has been quantitative analysis while strategy as practice research has predominantly been qualitative. This research adopts a multilevel approach. More specifically it contributes empirical evidence as scholars (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013) lament the fragmentation of the research agenda lacking practical relevance. In addition this multilevel research approach addresses the empirical challenges associated with microfoundational research because the scarcity of empirical research has historically been attributed to a need for data sampling on at least two levels of analysis (Foss and Pedersen, 2014). Thus empirical evidence has given rise to formulating information seeking patterns demonstrating actions, interactions and behaviours leading to organisation performance. Indeed, developments arising from this research may spur further patterns of investigation of previously accepted knowledge.

The third contribution offers practical norms that guide the enablement of organisational ambidexterity. Turner et al. (2013), O'Reilly and Tushman (2013) and Birkinshaw and Gupta (2013), contend that scholars do not have sufficient empirical evidence of ambidexterity grounded in practice. This research has aimed to address the call of these researchers to "refocus" and "rethink" the concept of ambidexterity. Consequently this study sought to observe the practical realities in multinationals to inform behaviours and decision-making abilities, which will enable organisations to capitalise on the resources already at its disposal and bridge the divide between theory and practice. It has aimed to contribute relevance and impact to managerial practice because strategic management has been criticised for this lack (Antonacopoulou, 2009). Both Antonacopoulou (2009) and Antonacopoulou and Balogun (2010) have argued for research enabling more academic / practitioner collaboration because it increases levels of relevance and impact. They argue that

these collaborations provide a useful foundation to establish the purposefulness of collaborative research and that the purposefulness manifests itself through the influence of theory and managerial practice (Antonacopoulou and Balogun, 2010).

A strategy as practice view of organisational ambidexterity may help scholars with more purposeful research by encouraging academic / practitioner connectivity through learning-driven collaborations (Antonacopoulou, 2009). Thus, to fulfil the unrealised promise of competitive advantage linked to organisational ambidexterity, there is a continuous need to bridge the divide between theory and practice. If we do not address how theory is paired with actual practice, our knowledge of how and why organisations matter is questionable at best (Hallett, 2010).

3.8 References

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Appendix 3A. Statement of Authorship

This declaration concerns the article entitled:							
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Publication status (tick one)							
Draft Manuscript	Submitted		In Review		Accepted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published
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Candidate's contribution to the paper (detailed, and also given as a percentage).	<p>The candidate contributed to/ considerably contributed to/ predominantly executed the</p> <p>Formulation of ideas: 100%</p> <p>Design of methodology: 100%</p> <p>Experimental work: 100%</p> <p>Presentation of data in journal format: 100%</p>						
Statement from Candidate	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research Candidature.						
Signed	Natasha Rose				Date	10 April 2017	

CHAPTER 4.

Organisational Ambidexterity: Navigating Paradoxical Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how demands for innovation are met by the pursuit of organisational ambidexterity. We argue that organisations require different forms of organising to navigate the tensions between innovation and efficiency. We identify three forms of organising innovation: external innovation forms, greenfields operations and virtual isolation to explain how organisations adapt to external environmental changes without negatively impacting their existing business requirements. This research also unpicks the organising behaviours required to manage those tensions. A multilevel, exploratory investigation, comprising 47 interviews, in 2 dynamic technology-driven industries is undertaken to explain how organisations manage these paradoxes. Our contribution to organisational studies is to advance an understanding of the interplay between organisational configurations and behaviours necessary to reconcile paradoxical challenges.

Key Words:

Organisational Ambidexterity, Innovation, Forms of Organising, Individuals, Management, Paradox

4.1 Introduction

Researchers and managers have expressed continuous interest in the organisation's ability to manage organisational paradoxes. Scholarly appeal stems from longstanding interest in firm survival while managers are interested in ensuring firm performance. Organisations increasingly need to innovate to keep abreast of external market requirements to ensure future longevity and simultaneously adapt to internal pressures to maintain existing revenue streams. To do so management must manage their organisations and their strategies especially in rapidly changing environments (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). Therefore the pursuit of innovation is seen as addressing future-focused concerns while exploiting organisational efficiency ensures current business profitability is sustained. The pursuit of these seemingly opposing strategies presents paradoxical challenges. As organisations grow they become large, rigid, bureaucratic, slow to adapt and consequently struggle to implement anything other than incremental change (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). However, research has indicated that organisations are more likely to remain successful over longer periods if they are ambidextrous - simultaneously exploring future-focused innovation without affecting existing business (Halevi et al., 2015).

Much literature has been devoted to understanding how organisations manage different strategic orientations. Its purpose is to provide insights into the configurations available to management to successfully address those paradoxes. This paper conceptualises the integration of structural and contextual ambidexterity to understand how organisations manage paradoxes. Organisations do this by managing different strategic orientations simultaneously to ensure that they are focused on innovation without compromising business efficiency. An innovation-focused orientation includes risk-taking, experimenting, uncertainty, future-looking prospects, environmental changes, external opportunities, future viability, future returns and new business opportunities. Maintaining the existing business involves efficiency, problem-solving, current viability, competencies, core business, mainstream business and traditional technologies.

Organisational ambidexterity is of particular significance in this context because research has indicated that successful organisations are able to address the competing demands of dual functionalities (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). To address these paradoxes the organisation needs to accommodate both innovation and efficiency to address business requirements. And of equal importance is

sustaining the profitable income streams from existing business while planning the pipeline for future income. Organisations need to be efficient, set strategic direction, limit risks and avoid costly mistakes to maintain their existing business (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). Simultaneously they need to be flexible and agile to adapt to changes in the external environment to ensure their longevity (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). To address the need for innovation we identify three forms of organising innovation, namely: external innovation forms, greenfields operations, and virtual isolation. External innovation forms arise when organisations partner with external start-ups by sponsoring technical expertise or other resources. A greenfields operation refers to subdividing an existing business unit to create a separate team to pursue innovation. Virtual isolation is a temporary, informal activity where a small team, or individual, pursues one innovative idea independently before integrating back into the wider team. To manage the paradoxical challenges of innovation and efficient business strategies dynamic organisations rely on its management to resolve these tensions (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996; Han and Celly, 2008; Eisenhardt et al., 2010). As individuals ultimately integrate these contradictory pursuits (Smith and Tushman, 2005), it is argued that behaviour shapes the organisation's ability to manage organisational ambidexterity. At the organisational level formal and informal structures foster an environment conducive to ambidexterity. At the individual level, skills, motivation and belief systems influence the enactment of organisational ambidexterity.

This challenges our traditional understanding of the structural and contextual configurations used to enact ambidexterity. Structural ambidexterity proposes the creation of distinct functional business units, each with a separate alignment of people, processes and structures (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996) and contextual ambidexterity is achieved when individuals divide their time between innovation and improvement (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). However these modes of enabling organisational ambidexterity are insufficient to explain how organisations pursue future viability without adversely impacting its existing revenue streams. Thus new approaches to the way the organisation organises itself ambidextrously are required. This is because previous orientations have focused on organisational structures and have ignored behavioural factors or social interactions.

An exploratory inductive method was followed to address the forms of organising required to navigate innovation and the behaviours necessary to manage it. We conducted 47 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a range of technical

experts, managers and directors at multiple levels of the organisation. The research was conducted with 6 global multinationals across 2 technology-driven industries because the simultaneous pursuit of innovation and improvement is vital to these organisations' long-term success. Technology-driven industries illustrate how incumbents in dynamic environments manage the paradoxical challenges of different strategic orientations, current competencies and future returns, core business and non-strategic units, agile and traditional technologies, technological innovation and organisational adaption.

Increasing organisational complexity, market turbulence and environmental changes have given rise to a need for organisational fluidity (Schreyogg and Sydow, 2010). More flexible solutions are required by organisations to address how they pursue innovation to ensure quick responsiveness without adversely impacting existing income streams. Thus organisational complexity requires organisational and behavioural explanations.

As organisations are increasingly confronted with dynamic environments, existing organisational forms may not be sufficient to ensure that they respond swiftly and flexibly to change (Halevi et al., 2015). In addition the often-conflicting demands within organisations mean that a trade-off between efficiency and innovation is often sought. As a result greater flexibility is required to address the needs of complex organisations. To do this, Jansen et al. (2016) have called for research on how informal and formal configurations address paradoxical challenges. This is of value because Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) have found that organisations need to develop practical solutions to understand how complex organisations deal with ambidexterity.

Behavioural factors impacting ambidexterity is an underexplored area because scholars have called for research to understand how the allocation of resources are mobilised between innovation and efficiency (Birkinshaw et al., 2016; Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). This call for further research indicates limited awareness of the behavioural attributes that bring about ambidexterity (Jansen et al., 2016; Halevi et al., 2015).

This paper contributes to organisational studies literature by advancing an understanding of the interplay between organisational configurations and the behaviours necessary to reconcile paradoxical challenges. Thus we propose that

regardless of where ambidexterity originates from, it is the social interactions of individuals that shape its enablement.

4.2 Theoretical Background

4.2.1 Organisational Ambidexterity's Response To Paradoxes

Organisations must master both innovation and efficiency to grow and ensure long-term survival (Tushman and O'Reilly, 2006). Organisational ambidexterity literature is beneficial to explain the paradox between organisational pursuits and management's need to manage those tensions (Markides, 2006). Thus ambidextrous organisations are those: "companies capable of achieving efficiency in their existing business while at the same time having the strategic foresight to innovate and explore new businesses" (Markides and Chu, 2008, p. 2). Ambidextrous firms are therefore capable of simultaneous, seemingly contradictory pursuits exploiting current business competencies while exploring new business avenues with equal dexterity (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2010; Lubatkin, 2006). It is argued that the pursuit of ambidexterity enables management to explore new opportunities to ensure survival such as untapped markets and exploratory innovation without impacting the exploitation of its existing products or services (Halevi et al., 2015). The choice between these paradoxical challenges alone may ensure short-term firm performance but long-term survival requires sustained and continuous involvement to address the multiple conflicting demands (Smith and Lewis, 2011). This is because external environments include greater degrees of competition and rapid technology change while internal environments become more complex, bureaucratic and restricted by governance.

To ensure innovation for the future while sustaining efficiency in the present requires effective management of the organisation and its strategies. Organisations increasingly face the dilemma where the introduction of new business conflicts with the existing business (Ansari, et al., 2015). One way that this has been addressed in ambidexterity literature is in terms of form and structure. The traditional view of structural ambidexterity holds that organisations physically separate their innovation and efficiency endeavours into distinct business units (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). This reflects what Birkinshaw and Gibson (2004) argue is an extreme form of separating dual structures. However organisations with complex organisational

structures require greater flexibility in its configurations. This is especially relevant as organisations generally become more structured and less agile as they grow (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). Therefore less rigid structural configurations are required. A means to address this challenge is through spatial differentiation for example by developing organisational “spin-outs” to specifically pursue new opportunities (Eisenhardt et al., 2010; Christensen and Bower, 1996). In this configuration exploratory business units are small relative to exploitation units and integrate back into the larger unit once the innovation has been completed (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). A common practice in organisations is the creation of a unit that supports cross-functional teamwork (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Some scholars have captured this in organisational ambidexterity literature as team ambidexterity (Haas, 2010).

The paradox arises because the activities required for efficiency differ to those required for innovation and consequently different structures are required to accommodate these tensions. For example activities measuring efficiency such as actual output versus potential output stifles the organisation’s ability to innovate (Benner and Tushman, 2003). An alternate form of structurally organising ambidexterity is by means of temporal ambidexterity where the separation of activities are divided by time in that one activity occurs after the other (Turner et al., 2013). This is based on the premise that organisations that are able to adapt to change will grow and survive (Tushman and O’Reilly, 1996). In this way organisations experience paradoxical challenges because innovation is an essential part of survival but larger organisations are slower to adapt or change. Thus organisational growth can lead to organisations finding temporary avenues and informal means to pursue innovation.

Unlike Porter’s (1985) value chain analysis that separates the organisation’s value creation activities into core and support functions, ambidextrous organisations must view both functions as equally important although the strategy to address each differs. Organisational ambidexterity accommodates various forms of organising where multiple seemingly conflicting business structures can co-exist and this is possible because people create that balance (Smets et al., 2012). Most ambidexterity research reflects balancing innovation and improvement (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). We propose a different approach. By highlighting the forms of organising innovation, this research will demonstrate how organisations enact ambidexterity successfully. Organisations in dynamic industries may need to alternate focus between innovation and efficiency for ambidexterity to be enabled

successfully. For this reason the behaviours associated with reconciling new and existing opportunities is of significance to its successful enablement.

Research has demonstrated that management plays a critical role in configuring their organisations to adapt to the environment required (Tushman and O' Reilly, 1996). Management are essential to manage not only their organisations but their strategies in dynamic environments as well (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). Therefore of interest is the organising behaviour that creates an ambidextrous environment. For example Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) proposed that success from flexible organisational structures is dependent on greater intervention by management and greater focus on the individual. Organisations are complex institutions, and complexity arises when seemingly incompatible logics compete for the organisation's limited resources. Smets et al. (2012) cautioned that structural ambidexterity and contextual ambidexterity (the division of time between innovation and improvement) does not adequately explain ambidexterity in organisations with complex structures in terms of where and how integration occurs. Therefore the context in which ambidexterity occurs and the individuals that make it happen play a significant role. In this way organisational ambidexterity provides individuals with the context for their organising behaviour (Mumby, 1998). Organising behaviour could be streamlined to explain how communicating about ambidexterity creates meaning for individuals. Over time it becomes part of their common experience and the behaviour becomes common to both individuals and management (Mumby, 1998).

Despite the limitations that exist in current ambidexterity configurations, contextual and structural ambidexterity research does not adequately explain how individuals enact ambidexterity (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Simsek, 2009). This research considers that the key to managing paradox does not lie in the organisation's choice of ambidexterity configuration, be it structural or contextual ambidexterity alone. Instead, individuals themselves and their actions within the organisation's environment are necessary to reconcile conflicting demands. Thus management and individuals at lower organisational levels play a key role in the managing paradoxical challenges. For this reason a focus on individuals, regardless of hierarchical level, is warranted as they manage change. Research has demonstrated that the behaviour of individuals impacts the organisation's ability to simultaneously explore and exploit (Jansen et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2014; Carmeli and Halevi, 2009). However, these studies conveyed the perspective of top management teams, managers and laboratory experiments (Good and Michel,

2013). Therefore a clear distinction is made in this research: individuals may or may not be placed hierarchically at management-level (Keller and Weibler, 2015), but are first and foremost professionals (engineers, technology architects), consultants, advisors or specialists (business analysts, IT specialists) who enact organisational ambidexterity.

4.2.2 Perspectives On Innovation

Scholars have considered the value of innovation because it is associated with organisational performance and growth (Grigoriou and Rothaermel, 2014). Similarly ambidexterity literature has addressed many organisational concerns such as innovation because it is linked to growth and performance (Zimmermann et al., 2016). References to innovation in organisational ambidexterity literature have led to many different interpretations and inconsistent use. Benner and Tushman (2003) referred to technological innovations as a means of adapting to change and proposed that continuous innovations resulted in efficiency improvements. Discontinuous innovation is seen as reconfiguring existing technology or totally redesigning it (Kollmann et al., 2009). Radical innovations are aimed at shaping the future (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Bower and Christensen (1996) first discussed disruptive innovation in connection with technology innovations. Consequently innovation has been applied to exploratory and exploitative innovation (Benner and Tushman, 2003), continuous innovation (Magnusson and Martini, 2008), business-model innovation (Ansari and Krop, 2012), disruptive product innovation or new-market innovations (Ansari et al., 2015).

The way in which innovation is addressed within the ambidexterity literature is not as an autonomous subject but rather to reflect the inherent tensions associated with seemingly disparate logics (March, 1991). For example Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) refer to the tensions between incremental and discontinuous innovation; Marchides and Chu (2006) refer to the duality of innovation and efficiency; and Tushman et al. (2011) reference the tension between new innovations and core products. Innovation is critical to management as they navigate new possibilities without adversely impacting the exploitation of existing products (Halevi et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant to organisations operating in dynamic environments where the external market demands fast-paced innovation (Eisenhardt, 1989) and the internal environment needs to swiftly respond to the

changing demands. To address these paradoxes management: “explicitly look for ways that the contradictory strategies can help each other” (Smith and Tushman, 2005, p. 527) and manage the dualities of existing products and innovation (Halevi et al., 2015) and “make mindful possible synergies between these products” (Smith and Tushman, 2005, p. 529).

Despite the focus of innovation within the context of ambidexterity, the authors are cognisant of its application in various other literature streams. The way in which innovation is organised can be looked at from many theoretical perspectives: strategy (Osiyevskyy and Dewald, 2015), theory of disruption (Christensen, 2006); strategic management theory (Ansari and Krop, 2012), innovation (Kapoor and Klueter, 2015); entrepreneurship (Simsek et al., 2016), institutional theory and contingency theory (Burns and Stalker, 1961). Although technology-driven organisations value innovation as fundamental to their success, these organisations cannot do so without maintaining the existing income streams that sustain it. For these reasons the forms of organising innovation are framed in terms of organisational ambidexterity rather than innovation literature. This is because the emphasis is on managing paradoxes and the value derived from its dual focus. It also explains why open innovation was not selected as the preferred paradigm although it assumes that organisations use internal and external ideas and configurations to achieve innovation (Chesbrough, 2003). Open innovation seeks different means to achieve innovation, while this research seeks different means to manage innovation and efficiency simultaneously. Thus it concerns how ambidexterity supports innovation.

Organisational ambidexterity is selected as the lens through which to approach this research because “organisational ambidexterity is prized as a means of managing such innovation tensions” (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009, p. 697). Although this research looks at the forms of organising innovation it does not look at innovation as the sole strategy embarked on by the organisation. It considers innovation as one part, albeit an essential part, of the organisation’s pursuit of long-term success. It is these dual pursuits that create paradoxical challenges but also provide the greatest opportunity for benefit. Therefore organisational ambidexterity is significant because it focuses on the inherent tension between innovation and efficiency (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). For example external innovation forms (partnering with an external start-up) or incubators are commonly associated with innovation literature but can also be seen as a solution to engaging in innovation

and efficiency in separate organisational units external to the organisation (Garud et al., 2011). Underlying this debate on organisational paradoxes lie concerns about how to configure the organisation and how to manage those paradoxes. Thus new innovative approaches are required to meet the demands of dynamic organisations because traditional approaches to producing products and services are insufficient to reconcile the disparities between old and new business. To address this, two specific questions are asked: What are the forms of organising required to resolve paradoxical challenges? And which organising behaviours are necessary to manage paradoxes?

4.3 Research Design And Methods

This study was conducted across 2 technology-driven industries that consider cutting-edge technology to be core to their business offering. (See Table 4.2 Annexure 1 on p. 140 for a brief overview of the organisations). These organisations are subject to the rapid pace of change, constant threat of technology obsolescence and fierce competition. Emphasis was placed on global multinationals because research indicates that large organisations are more likely to simultaneously innovate and improve (Lubatkin et al., 2006). And these organisations actively look for opportunities to grow and expand. That expansion often results in cumbersome structures and decreased agility (Eisenhardt et al., 2010; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). Technology-driven industries illustrate the paradoxes organisations face in dynamic environments by managing their core business and non-strategic units, introducing agile technologies while maintaining traditional technologies and simultaneously ensuring technological innovation and organisational adaption. Thus these organisations reflect multinationals whose long-term success depends on their ability to manage these paradoxes, thereby serving the objectives of this research.

3.4.1 Data Collection

To explore how the demands for innovation are met by organisational ambidexterity, we undertook an empirical examination of technology driven industries. Data was collected from the 6 case companies by means of interviews with the relevant actors at different levels of the organisation from specialists such as engineers to directors.

The intention was to gather first-hand accounts of the individuals engaged in ambidextrous implementations or ambidextrous decision making at a strategic level. In-depth knowledge about this phenomenon was acquired by means of 47 semi-structured interviews ranging between 50 and 70 minutes, which allowed the time-constrained respondents an opportunity to relate examples of actual occurrences. The semi-structured interviews were adopted to allow respondents to account for examples of activities such as “what they learnt from a failed implementation”. This captured the experiences of respondents and allowed them to “engage in a stream of consciousness” (Gioia and Thomas, 1996, p. 374). The interviews looked at respondents past and current experiences (Jarzabkowski, 2003) to gain a comprehensive account of how they pursue ambidexterity. To maximise sample variation 47 interviews were conducted with technical experts, lower, middle and senior managers, as well as directors across two technology driven industries. 24 interviews were conducted across technology organisations and 23 across telecoms organisations. This was to ensure that the actual experiences of individuals were captured (Gioia et al., 2012). The interview respondents included 11 specialists, 7 managers, 8 senior managers, 13 heads of department, and 8 directors. Each interview commenced by establishing whether organisational ambidexterity was undertaken. To do this the respondents were asked if they could identify with the March (1991) definition of ambidexterity where exploration is characterised by innovation, discovery, experimentation and risk-taking; and exploitation is synonymous with improvement, implementation, execution, efficiency and refinement. To varying degrees all interview respondents could relate examples of participation in exploratory and exploitative activities.

This research was subject to a non-disclosure agreement given the sensitive information shared and the competitiveness of the industry. Following permission from the directors, respondents in their business units were recruited using a snowball sampling technique in which participants identified other potential respondents (Rudestam and Newton, 2007). The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, coded and analysed (Gioia et al., 2012). The recording enabled the interviewer to note down any observations during the interview and to note key issues that could be followed up on. The semi-structured interview method provided the flexibility to delve deeper into the respondents' experiences (Granqvist and Gustafsson, 2015). This was to establish connections between the raw data to derive theoretical conclusions. Data integrity and richness was derived from

respondents' direct revelations. Follow-up interviews were conducted with three respondents to further explore recurring details emerging from the interviews.

3.4.2 Data Analysis

We began our analysis using an open coding approach (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Strauss and Corbin, 2008), focusing on keywords reflecting how respondents viewed their organisation's exploratory and exploitative efforts, the ways in which the organisation managed ambidextrous efforts, and the ways in which innovation was pursued, etc. Consistent with similar inductive research (Granqvist and Gustafsson, 2015), the research questions posed emerged from an analysis of the literature.

The first and second levels of analysis followed the so-called Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2013). The analytical process reflecting the movement from initial data to higher levels of abstraction is reflected in Figure 4.1 (see page 112). In this way the first column reflects the interviewee responses as first order concepts and the next column reflects aggregate concepts as the second order concepts.

Following the example of Granqvist and Gustafsson (2015), the analysis started with an assumption that the interview respondents were "knowledge agents" which Gioia et al. (2012) describe as individuals who not only know what they want to do but have the ability to explain their actions, activities and ideas. This method provided real-time accounts of the respondent's lived-experiences without judgement or interpretation (Gioia et al., 2012). To capture this, "informant-centric" terms were coded in the 1st order coding (Gioia et al., 2012, p. 18). For example, the respondents used different words to describe innovation such as "radical change", "pure innovation" and "exploration".

An initial analysis was completed using 15 interviews. This was to establish support for the research questions in the dataset. This early analysis indicated that both technology driven industries considered innovation to be a critical business function while efficiency was either not measured or subject to governance restrictions. The disparity in approach between the organisations spurred further investigation. This was done following the Gioia et al. (2012) assertion that new research concepts and underexplored concepts emerge as the study evolves. The initial coding was done in Nvivo and a codebook was derived from the transcribed

interviews. Using the codebook the remaining coding and analysis was completed in Excel for ease of data management. The 1st order coding was based on respondents' terms and no attempt was made to limit these (Gioia et al., 2012).

To obtain a true reflection of the of the respondents perspectives, each interview was analysed using open coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). A large number of codes emerged from this process relating to how decisions were made, the ownership of the process followed, the environment in which activities occurred, how they explored and exploited, the objectives of the organisation and function, the internal business dynamics, leadership and management factors, practices engaged in, process participants, the organisational structure and conditions under which outcomes were enabled and constrained. The open coding process was repeated until data saturation was reached where no new codes emerged. Using Nvivo software the initial 197 codes were categorised into broader themes. Following an iterative process these categorisations were refined into first-order categories, second-order themes and aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012) as reflected in Figure 4.1 (see page 112) Similar to the process followed by Papachroni et al. (2016), similarities and differences in interpretation occurred between both individuals and the case organisations.

Following on from insights gained during the first stage of analysis, the second stage was aimed at further exploring the concepts that emerged from the first stage. This involved axial coding to link themes to contexts and consequences to derive patterns of interactions and causes (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). For example the emerging second order code of Greenfields Operations emerged from respondent remarks on exploration, taking risks as well as the management involvement in enabling it, the organisational structures involved and the resources engaged. Exploring the interconnections between the concepts enabled not only a higher order grouping of the 1st order codes but also an indication of how these themes were connected.

During the second phase of analysis, to investigate the different mechanisms used to explore innovation and the behaviours exercised, we open coded the dataset to reflect how respondents engaged in these activities. Consequently, depth of understanding was gained through numerous quotations and examples of interview respondents' engagement in exploratory initiatives. During this analysis similar activities were aggregated and duplications removed to reflect second-order themes

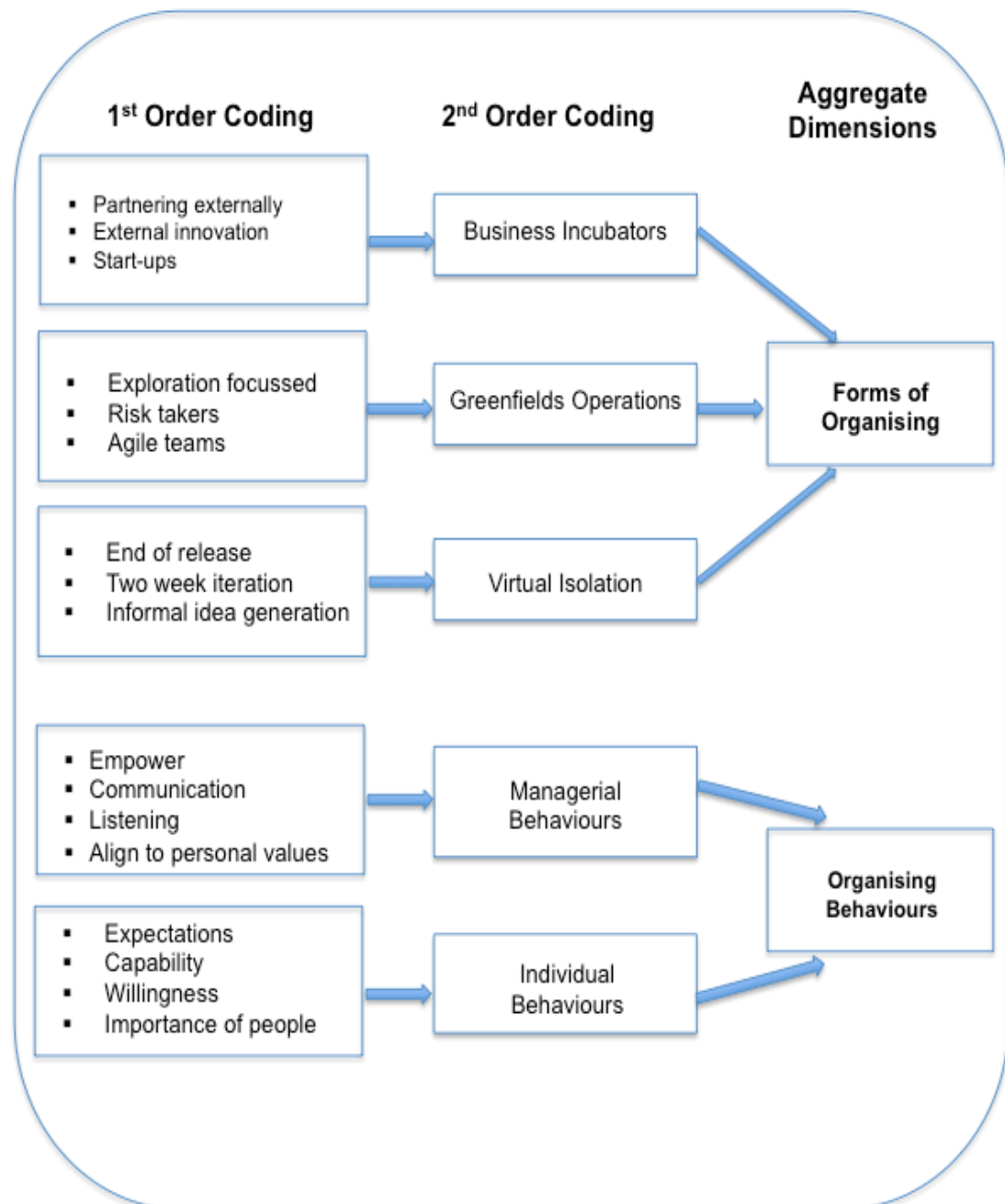
such as business incubators, and external start-ups were condensed to reflect external forms of organising. The insights and themes emerging from the first two stages of analysis informed the second phase of data analysis and paved the way for the third stage.

At this point 2nd order coding was undertaken which Gioia et al. (2012, p.20) referred to as “using researcher-centric concepts, themes, and dimensions.” The codes were condensed into groupings of similar codes for example: “partnering externally” reflected innovation that organisations were involved in. Whereas “external innovation” indicates innovation that occurred outside of the organisation but it did not necessarily reflect the organisation’s involvement. To demonstrate rigor in the data analysed, this phase illustrated the progression from raw data to emerging themes.

In the final stage of analysis a clearer link emerged between the different mechanisms used to explore innovation by means of ambidexterity. At this stage we conducted selective coding by concentrating on key themes of innovation forms and relating them to interviewee quotations. Inline with the process followed by Corbin and Strauss (2008), we then validated the emerging relationships and substantiated additional categories to further refine and develop the emerging model. These are demonstrated in the aggregate dimensions reflected in Figure 4.1 (see page 112). At this point in our analysis two distinct dimensions emerged: Forms of Organising and Organising Behaviours.

To test the robustness of the coding structure a negotiated agreement approach was followed where an independent reviewer looked at the coding scheme of the same dataset. This is in line with other exploratory research utilising semi-structured interviews (Papachroni et al., 2015; Campbell et al., 2013). The correlation between the findings provided confidence in the findings that emerged from the data analysis.

Figure 4.1. Data Structure



4.4 Findings

The findings point to three forms of organising innovation and two behavioural dimensions required to manage change. This is because organisations sought to manage future-focused ventures while sustaining their existing business. Table 4.3. Annexure 2 on p. 141 reflects how the quotes are spread across the different case companies and demonstrates when and why the different forms of organising are

used. Although the data is presented through selective quotes these are included to reflect the general sentiment of respondents across the industries.

4.4.1 Forms of Organising

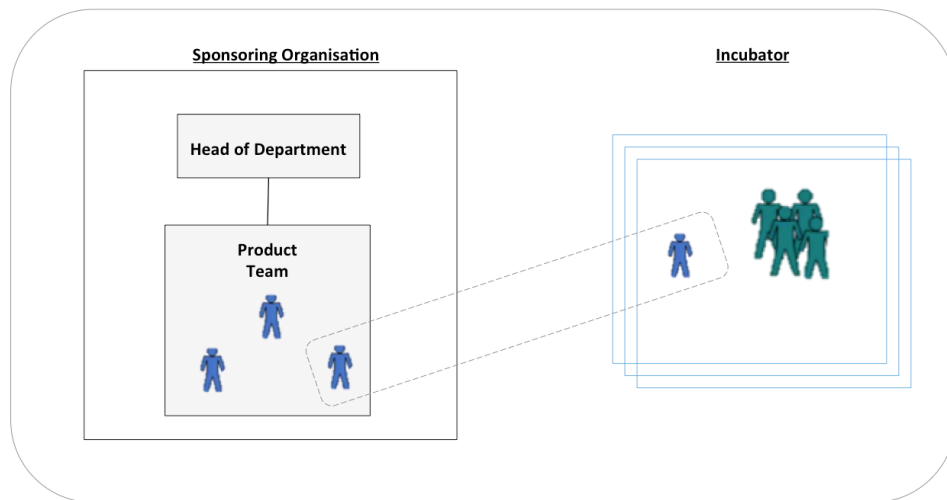
Respondents revealed why focussing on exploratory innovation was important. They believed that pursuing innovation provided an opportunity to “build the pipeline” for future possibilities.

“Because our field moves at a ridiculous rate...if we don’t innovate we will die as a company...if we don’t, we’ll be left behind. It just moves too quickly and if you are stagnant...and you don’t learn anything in your field in five years you’ll be obsolete really quickly” (Software Engineer, Telecoms C)

It was this fear of obsolescence that prompted organisations to select the appropriate form of organising to meet their needs.

External Innovation Forms: Organisations invested in business incubators by partnering with external entrepreneurial start-ups (Figure 4.2. p. 114). The organisations participated by providing multiple forms of support and services such as resource capability, infrastructure and process expertise. Their involvement was attributed to management’s concern that the organisation lost touch with the “fast pace of innovation” as it increased in size because they were “bogged down” by efficiency.

Figure 4.2. External Innovation Forms



“Not all the innovation comes internally, that's definitely not the case. So external innovation and partnering outside of [Company] is key in the next few years and the type of harnessing of the start-ups and incubators.” (Specialist Solutions Architect, Technology A)

External innovation forms were perceived to produce innovation at a faster pace because they were agile. Agility implied freedom from constraints imposed by organisational structures, processes and governance. By investing in innovation externally ambidextrous organisations were able to safeguard their existing market stronghold and limit their risk exposure while being watchful of potential future market disruptions. In this way they were exposed to emergent innovations and alert to prospective changes in the market direction without large capital investments.

“That whole incubator side [is great] because I see new young companies coming up with great disruptive ideas and I find that fascinating and much quicker than [Company] is at doing stuff and getting stuff to market.” (Specialist Solutions Architect, Technology B)

A concern voiced by many respondents was the organisation's slow pace of change. Despite the available technology and expertise respondents felt constrained by the lack of time and internal restrictions such as business case justification and budgetary approval. Respondents believed these governance structures were better suited to sustaining efficiency than encouraging innovation. They indicated that governance restrictions slowed their ability to adapt and introduce new ideas. Partnering with incubators enabled watching success or failure, market adoption or rejection at a safe distance with limited resource commitment. One respondent illustrated the trade-off and benefit of having

incubators trial a new chat facility without adversely impacting the organisation's "bottom-line".

"Google tried it and it failed. The market wasn't ready, that was six or seven years ago. It was too early. But now it's back from a different company." (Specialist Engineer, Technology C)

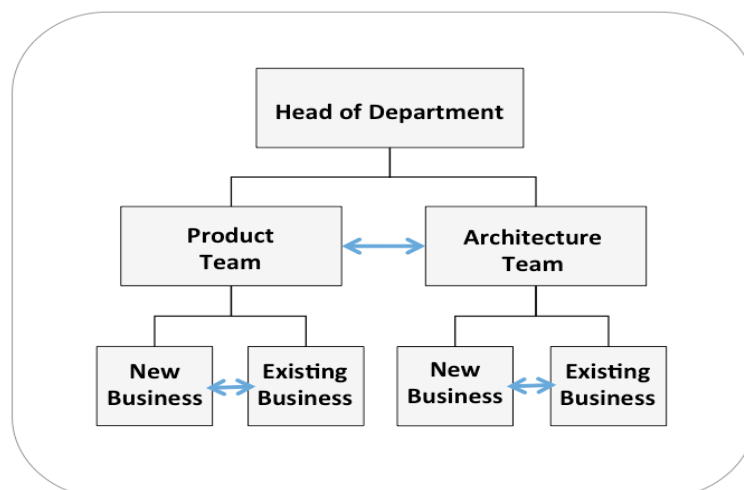
External innovation forms enable ambidexterity by providing an opportunity to simultaneously explore new avenues while safeguarding the existing business. Partnering with incubators limited new market entrants and potential competition because the organisation acquired the incubator and integrated it into the organisation once the venture proved successful.

"Personally it's a result of [Company] pursuing a strategy of acquiring smaller companies aggressively and integrating them into a larger whole. I was part of an acquisition and that company had an innovative approach...and I kept working that way because I was accustomed to that" (Specialist Software Engineer, Technology, Technology C).

External innovation demonstrates how risk-averse organisations are able to support, grow and sustain niche, radical entrepreneurial businesses (Markides, 2006).

Greenfields Operations: Greenfields operations refer to the creation of small-scale sub-business units to explore innovation (Figure 4.3). These sub-divisions occurred within the existing team and organisational structures and thus co-existed alongside the team's profitable mainstream business.

Figure 4.3. Greenfields Operations



A respondent explained why greenfields operations were beneficial:

*"We...look at ourselves in two ways: One, as a separate entity so we can...take risks and try something new and do something that doesn't follow the normal standards and...we maintain an interface [with a number of other Company products]...that's what maintains almost like a start-up or small company mentality within this huge company."
(Director, Technology A)*

A separate structure created an environment enabling experimentation where individuals faced less governance restrictions than mainstream business ventures. This dual construction embodied structural ambidexterity where the team or group is divided into innovation and improvement activities (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). However, greenfields operations differed in that they shared information cross-functionally to "maintain an interface" with other teams in the group or team. Although the units operated autonomously, they were not isolated.

Management was instrumental in allocating individuals to a team based on their ability thereby demonstrating how management behaviour impacted individual actions. One head of department intimated that: "those that will innovate, will and those that won't, won't". The greenfields operations evolved because management was concerned that existing structures stifled creativity.

*"When you have a product that is mainstream there's a whole set of compliance and governance around that... But I think that is the biggest barriers we have, we are not agile enough as we enter new markets. And we also need to be both agile...and realise that these successes don't happen overnight."
(Solutions Architect, Telecoms B)*

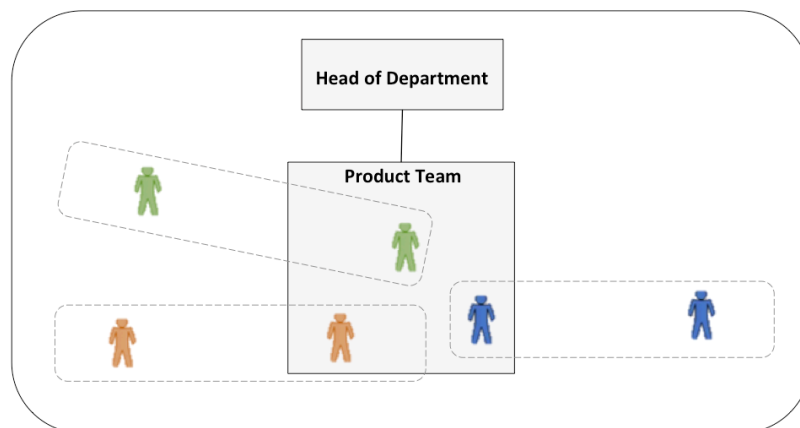
Respondents demonstrated that the formation of a dual structure was born from a need to be "agile" and a fear of lagging behind competitors. The dual structure enabled new products to be trialled on a small scale, while the greater team achieved its quarterly targets. If the newly trialled products proved to be successful it was rolled out more widely. Teams had monthly, quarterly and annual financial targets and the dual structure ensured that the combined team was able to sustain income sources while exploring new revenue streams.

*"Yes, it's a reflection of managing a business that is slightly smaller so we can be a bit nimble, try things quickly, tentative learn, improve and we know if we get it wrong it's not going to be a disaster or lose millions of pounds worth of value."
(Head of Department, Telecoms A)*

The respondents agreed that small-scale innovation reduced risk but enabled organisational ambidexterity to flourish. They revealed that team members were motivated by a common vision, despite the dual structures, to add value to the organisation. This close proximity enabled individuals to share resources across the distinct units (Simsek et al., 2015; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). This addresses criticism that structurally separating innovation and efficiency leads to isolation because it fails to link innovation to the organisation's mainstream business (Birkinshaw and Gibson, 2004). Greenfields operations allowed the organisation to exploit existing resources and capabilities and to use their available resources optimally. This is consonant with findings that organisational ambidexterity is enabled through the creation of dedicated teams who simultaneously pursue disruption and continuity (Kostoff et al., 2004).

Virtual Isolation: Virtual isolation is a temporal activity where an individual or small team pursue one idea independently (Figure 4.4). It is often for a short time period and individuals integrate back into the group or team after the period of "isolation". Virtual isolation reflects an informal arrangement and was adopted in technology-focused business units at the discretion of the director.

Figure 4.4. Virtual Isolation



A director explained why virtual isolation was beneficial:

"One of the advantages of being in a company as large as [Company] is that you can carve off smaller teams who can coalesce and come together to achieve one goal, do some research and build something."
(Director, Technology A)

Respondents frequently complained of a lack of time to be innovative. Because management recognised the importance of innovation within their industry, they agreed that the virtual periods of isolation produced ideas beneficial to the organisation. Individuals spent specifically allocated time on their own or as a team outside of their “day job” provided no additional time or resources were required. Virtual isolation ensured that the individual or teams were freed from other obligations while they worked on an initiative. One respondent explained that virtual isolation occurred after a specific target was met:

“At the end of every release, there are time slots that are dedicated to exploring, experimenting, iteration, innovation. It’s about two weeks where everyone in the group can dedicate to search, experiment, prototype, and at the end of the two weeks you present what you’ve done. And out of those trials and experiments, there may be something that we can bring forward and make into a product.” (Product Owner, Technology B)

The respondents conveyed that disruption to mainstream business was managed in that ideas were developed without impacting “live customers”. Individuals with front-line customer interactions were better placed to identify needs “the customer didn’t know they had”. Once an idea was generated it was shared with the team to gain support and buy-in. If viable, it was tested with customers who were willing to be part of testing a “trial” product before it was introduced into the main business. These customers were already using the organisation’s products. It introduced customers to new product offerings while legacy products were maintained. The dual functionality allowed the organisation to discontinue or safely phase-out legacy technology without losing customers before competitors introduced “competence-destroying” innovation (Bergek et al., 2013, p. 1210). As one respondent intimated: “planning for the future was essential because a new product would fall behind in a year’s time”.

In most instances individuals selected the idea they pursued but occasionally it was a managerial directive.

“We don’t necessarily innovate ourselves. And part of our executives’ challenge to us is to change that perception. One of the ways to do that is to form small teams and go and try a few things.” (Director, Technology C)

These management-directed virtual isolations had strategic consequences because its outcome impacted the organisation’s future direction. This is consistent with

findings by Jansen and colleagues (2016) that teams behave supportively when engaged in activities of strategic importance. If the small-scale idea proved successful, it was rolled out throughout the organisation or deployed into the market.

Virtual isolation reflects an informal means of structurally enabling innovation and efficiency. In support of similar findings by Birkinshaw and Gibson (2004), this dual structure reflects a top-down management arrangement of resources. However, virtual isolation differs in the assertion that management decides how employees spend their time. The self-report of respondents indicate that individuals decide how they spend their time during the periods of virtual isolation. The role of management lies in the creation of virtual isolation opportunities. In this way virtual isolation contains elements of structural, contextual, temporal and spatial ambidexterity. The evidence suggests that a mixed ambidextrous approach is beneficial when managing different strategic orientations. In addition to the forms of organising innovation specific organising behaviours are necessary to reconcile paradoxical challenges.

4.4.2 Two Sources of Organising Behaviour

This section looks at the behavioural forms of organising from two perspectives: organisational and individual. It implies that the organisation and individuals must act ambidextrously to simultaneously exploit current realities and explore emerging possibilities (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004).

Organisational Behaviours: These reflect the behaviours that management engage in to create an environment where ambidexterity flourishes. In addition it is indicative of the supportive behaviours that management engage in to meet the needs of individuals enacting ambidexterity. These behaviours are referred to as organisational behaviours because they influence the context in which organisational ambidexterity occur by ensuring organisational effectiveness (McCarthy and Gordon, 2011).

Table 4.1 (p. 120) demonstrates the types of behaviours that management engage in that influence the organisational culture, structure and the cooperation of individuals at different levels of the organisation. This is to ensure that the structure

Table 4.1. Managerial Behaviours Fostering Organisational Ambidexterity

Managerial Behaviour	Purpose	Support from Dataset
Empowering Behaviour	Individuals are given the freedom to do their work along with the responsibility and authority to make decisions	"I need to be empowered and largely sort of left to my own devices. I don't want to be, from a managerial point, I don't want to be supervised, I'd rather have a manager who is a facilitator not supervisor. So if I run into problems I can't solve (not technical problems) but this process is preventing me from achieving my goals and that person goes out and does their best to remove that roadblock." (Specialist Software Engineer)
Open Communication	Not only communicate the strategy down but enables an open door policy where people communicate up	"We very much have an open door strategy. Where everybody is approachable. For example my report is to the Vice president, and one of my direct reports, today, is having a one-on-one today with that vice president. So there's an opportunity to go and talk and it's in a very open environment." (Head of Department)
Value staff	Demonstrate to staff that they are valuable members of the team	"...Because you know if you get this far you are appreciated and respected." (Specialist Engineer) "So, what I think is, taking the time to listen to people and really listen and to act on them and to be very truthful with them. So rather than just listen and nodding and going: 'Yes we need to change that'. In some cases some things can't be changed and I think we have to be honest with people." (Head of Department)
Inclusive Behaviour	Include individuals in strategic objectives and team decisions	"...What benefits me is a high level of trust, there's limited bureaucracy and process. The process that's required and your ability to talk to people and make a decision quickly." (Manager) "I'd be the one that makes the recommendations but I don't make the decisions. So that goes through my GM up to the executive. I give input into those decisions, yes." (Manager)
Acknowledge Expertise	Individuals who are self-directed will be motivated when their expertise is valued	"Why pay somebody who's an expert and then tell him what to do. You brought him in because he's an expert. If you didn't need an expert, you wouldn't have brought him in and you could do it yourself. So, we don't pay people to tell them what to do. We pay people to tell us what to do as a leadership team." (Head of Department)
Recruitment Practices	Employ people that fit in well with the organisation	"I think if you want things to be executed well by people, you employ good people and turn them over to do the work and let them get on with it and take the obstacles out of their way that helps them get on with what they're doing." (Director)
Align values and beliefs	Align the values and beliefs of individuals to that of the organisation	"But if you put them in a role that doesn't align with their values and beliefs, you can measure their output till the cows come home but it's not going to get any better." (Director)

of the team and skills of individuals matched organisational objectives. While this list is not exhaustive, it illustrates those behaviours essential to manage the paradoxes of innovation and efficiency.

Management demonstrated that they needed to keep employees motivated and engaged to ensure that individuals acted ambidextrously. They recognised that the individuals required an organisational structure that enabled communication, listening to staff and removing barriers that constrained them. To manage the competing demands of an ambidextrous team, management indicated that the environment needed to accommodate the needs of all individuals. Management also indicated that different types of people were important in the teams because they all contributed something valuable to the overall enactment of ambidexterity.

*“People will walk down that path in different ways, and you’ll get continuous improvement out of some people. You’ll get new innovation out of others. And what you’ll get from a third set of people is bug fixes.”
(Director)*

By accommodating individual’s needs management displayed an awareness of the value of both innovation and improvement to adapt to change. This is consonant with findings that ambidextrous organisations were successful in dynamic environments if their management were able to align the immediate requirements of existing business while demonstrating foresight to address future concerns (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). In this way management indicated how they fostered an environment conducive to adapting to change:

“To understand that ability, to have an idea, prototype it...[you have to] give a license to be impactful to the people who are committed to providing the roadmap because we need the money coming in but have the ability to define new business and new opportunities with data not PowerPoint.” (Director)

Management demonstrated that empowered individuals were committed to achieve organisational objectives. In this way management displayed an awareness of the conditions under which individuals were productive. Management also demonstrated that an environment conducive to ambidexterity produced tangible results that were more valuable than conceptual ideas on “PowerPoint”. This is consonant with findings that balancing tensions allows the organisation to timeously respond to shifts in its external environment (Tushman, 1997).

Individual level Behaviours: These demonstrate the key individual level attributes that shape individual's capability and willingness to engage in innovation and efficiency.

Respondents were motivated to achieve the organisation's objectives because they had confidence in their expertise and conviction that they could add value to the organisation. The respondents indicated that although they were aware of team targets, they were driven to achieve these not because of money but because they loved their work. They considered management's trust rewarding. As trust increased individuals demonstrated that they could be trusted:

"I am empowered...I am told roughly what needs to be done and in enough detail that I know roughly where I need to head and then I can go and do my thing to get us where we need to go. I am responsible. I take ownership at that point and it's for me to walk the path." (Manager)

Respondents displayed ownership, empowerment and dedication. Not only were respondents self-motivated and self-directed, they were driven to use their skills to the benefit of the organisation. This resonates with Gibson and Birkinshaw's (2004) idea of contextual ambidexterity where individuals are free to determine how they spend their time between innovation and improvement.

Respondents intimated that there was mutual benefit to enjoying their work: they were more motivated to deliver and they were happier in their environment. In this way respondent's motivation shaped their actions.

"It's about empowering individuals, it's about going for personal beliefs. About achieving something, getting the individual the things that they want. You just bought the most fantastic resource, you happen to have me. You didn't buy me because I passed a maths test at fifteen...you just need to point me in the right direction and I go." (Manager)

Respondents indicated that their actions were rooted in their past because the recruitment process was "arduous". This resonates with findings that the individual's framing of situations influenced their actions (Van Burg et al., 2014). In this way respondents demonstrated how past experience and perceptions shaped their reality. Respondents associated their employment as confirmation of the organisation's belief in their abilities and consequently felt a sense of obligation to honour that belief.

"It's this pride in working for [Company] it drives a lot of people. I don't want to let down the company, my customer or my boss for giving me this opportunity." (Specialist Engineer)

Contribution to the organisation's success was built on widespread belief that the organisation already was successful. Respondents linked their personal success to the organisation's success. Ultimately individuals believed that their contributions had impact:

"So there are things I will work on because they interest me. That's part of the equation. The bigger part is more around: 'Will it have a big impact on the business.' Therefore we can build a pipeline...that we can convert with a low conversion rate so we'll be more successful with it." (Specialist Solutions Architect)

This belief that individuals contributed to the overall success of the organisation was experienced at every hierarchical level. It drove individuals to focus on their areas of expertise whether experimenting with new ideas or "bug fixes". The responses demonstrated how individuals' actions and interactions shaped the behaviours necessary to manage innovation.

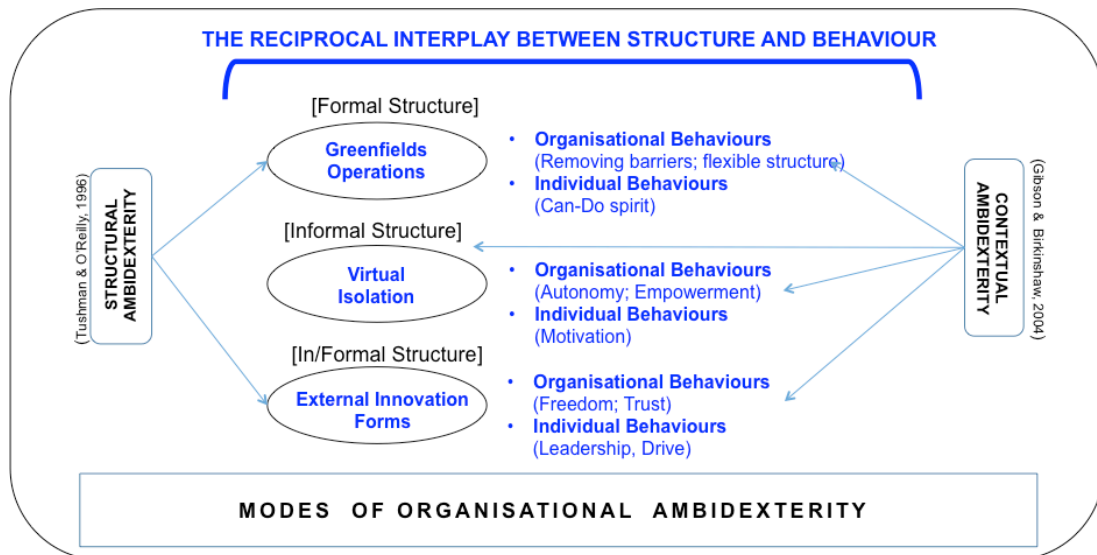
4.5 Discussion And Conclusion

This paper has addressed two research questions: what are the forms of organising required to resolve paradoxical challenges? And which organising behaviours are necessary to manage paradoxes?

Research suggests that organisational ambidexterity contributes to competitive advantage (Wang et al., 2014). Organisations have not always benefited from this claim because they have not always been successful at managing seemingly competing demands (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Therefore how organisations manage paradoxical challenges to be competitive continues to be of central importance to scholars. Research has identified different modes of enablement such as structural and contextual ambidexterity to reconcile conflicting demands (Rogan and Mors, 2014). Yet, our knowledge of how management mobilises its resource allocation between innovation and efficiency remains underexplored (Birkinshaw and Gupta, 2013; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013; Birkinshaw et al., 2016). This problem is especially pronounced in organisations

operating multiple organising structures with seemingly paradoxical objectives. Current literature has offered different configurations for enabling ambidexterity but these reflect mostly formal arrangements. Thus this research extends current thinking on the available configuration options at the organisation's disposal to effectively manage paradoxical challenges.

Figure 4.5. The Reciprocal Interplay Between Structure and Behaviour



4.5.1 Managing Paradox

We identified three forms of organising innovation without compromising the organisation's existing business: greenfields operations, virtual isolation and external innovation forms (Figure 4.5.). The findings suggest that organisations are more effective if they have a range of options from which to draw the most appropriate forms of organising to best adapt to change. In addition to the options available, the effectiveness of the configuration depends on the organisation's emphasis on structural, contextual or temporal ambidexterity (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). This choice is based on the risk appetite of the organisation, the impact on the mainstream business and the potential return on investment. In this way the organisation must continually adjust its strategy, adapt technology approaches and consider its competitive position (Ansari et al., 2015). The significance of available options is that organisations can adapt their approach to meet internal efficiency needs and innovation changes. An imbalance in focus, whether on efficiency or innovation, may lead to prolonged concentration on one at the expense of the other. The benefit of successfully enabling ambidexterity is that literature has indicated that

it is essential to secure “short-term performance and long-term survival” (Wang and Rafiq, 2014, p. 72). These forms of organising address a gap in our understanding on how informal and formal configurations address paradoxical challenges (Jansen et al., 2016).

The findings demonstrate that external innovation forms help organisations limit risk-taking without compromising experimentation. External innovation forms are valuable where risks or costs are too high to justify innovation internally. This is because innovation can easily disrupt organisational operations (March, 1991). Incubators innovate by developing products not considered to be core to the organisation but could ultimately change or disrupt the market. In this way incubators afford incumbents the ability to stave off competitors entering the market (Downes and Nunes, 2013). This is a form of architectural ambidexterity by using a combination of structure and strategy to ensure differentiation (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2010). Thus this form of organising allows ambidextrous organisations to successfully segregate innovation and efficiency.

While ambidextrous organisations with parallel structures may isolate innovation and efficiency structurally (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009), external innovation forms allow organisations to pursue ambidexterity with dual strategies (Tushman and O’Reilly, 1996). Dual strategies focused on external innovation and internal efficiency are not restricted by formal structures as it is commonly defined as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term goal. In this way organisations can pursue an informal approach to enact organisation ambidexterity. External innovation forms can be seen as an integrating mechanism between two disparate business models, the organisation and the external partner (Markides, 2013). It insulates the organisation from extreme risk and financial commitment without isolating it from innovation opportunities that are essential to ambidextrous organisations (Markides, 2013). External forms are structurally similar to the spatially separated units of spin-outs (Eisenhardt et al., 2010; Christensen and Bower, 1996) in that it is a small, decentralised unit that is physically separated from the larger organisational unit. Eisenhardt et al. (2010) explains that it can be integrated into the larger unit after the innovation has taken place. External forms differ to spin-outs by being a separate entity with no direct ties or commitment to the larger organisation. In addition, the external innovation form is often only acquired after it has become a successful venture. Therefore the relationship with the incubator is an informal one that may change if either party requests it.

The results support the adoption of greenfields operations alongside the existing business structure to balance risk-taking and experimentation with equal dexterity. It demonstrates how organisations can be ambidextrous using spatial differentiation by separating organisational units to focus on efficiency and innovation (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). The findings indicate that organisations limit exposure by encouraging exploratory innovation on a small scale while an adjacent team ensures profitable businesses are maintained. This supports previous findings that in these business units innovation is a decentralised function requiring flexible processes and organisational cultures, while efficiency is contained in larger business units with more restrictive cultures and processes (Benner and Tushman, 2003). Structuring in this way ensures quick wins and losses (Sitkin, 1992), or as one respondent indicated an opportunity to “fail quickly”.

This configuration benefits from linking teams and dual objectives within a group. The creation of different business contexts is supported by findings that team members who share the same vision are more motivated to help achieve it together (Simsek et al., 2015). Similarly innovation and efficiency are more easily integrated if it reflects the shared expectations of the team (Wang and Rafiq, 2014). Greenfields operations are an example of the spatial configuration advanced by Eisenhardt et al. (2010). However, our findings differ to their conceptualisation in that the greenfields operations do not integrate back into the larger team once innovation ends or the environment stabilises (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). Instead innovation and efficiency remain spatially separate units and maintain separate cultures and processes (Gilbert, 2006). Because innovation may obstruct the current organisational performance (Garud et al., 2011) and may reduce efficiency of the existing business (Van de Ven et al., 1999) because of its demand on available resources, separating innovation and efficiency functions may be beneficial.

Virtual isolation demonstrates how supportive management behaviour impacts individuals at lower levels of the organisation. In so doing it addresses a request to understand the effect of top-down behaviour on bottom-up actions (Jansen et al., 2016). Virtual isolation indicates how organisations can be ambidextrous by means of temporal differentiation where efficiency or innovation occurs for a given period of time (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). For example it allows individuals with experience of customer problems to spend independent time finding solutions to specific problems. Virtual isolation demonstrates how management and

individual's actions accommodate informal structures without being formally incorporated into an existing structure. Thus effective implementations should not neglect the importance of individuals in making decisions that impact the effectiveness of ambidexterity.

This configuration creates an opportunity to oscillate between innovation and efficiency with greater flexibility (Eisenhardt et al., 2010). Wang et al. (2014, p. 696) found that organisations that are temporally ambidextrous “prosper over time and enjoy greater performance improvement.” This form of organising is evident in ambidextrous organisations where formal structures suits efficiency while informal structures accommodates the flexibility inherent in innovation (Adler et al., 1999). A formal structure lends itself to routines while informal structures enables freedom. Organisational theory contends that formal structures and processes are embedded in the organisational culture and determined by its management (Adler et al., 1999). The evidence indicates that management is similarly instrumental in creating an informal culture.

In their study on how leaders navigate the paradox between a focus on core business and a demand of innovation, Tushman et al. (2013) found that in most companies, innovation is imbedded within their core businesses. Our findings concur with this assessment. In this way the structure of the organisation and management focus lend themselves to the simultaneous pursuit of innovation in new business and efficiency in their core business. In an effort to sustain existing revenue streams and protect their customer base, organisations tend to focus on their existing product lines because this is their core business and thereby lean toward exploitative efforts. This is more so because organisations have limited resources and need to be strategic in their allocation of resources. It takes management awareness, willingness to take risks and an appetite for change to engage in innovation, especially where resources have already been committed to efficiency and core business. Therefore the focus of this paper is on the ways in which innovation is addressed to maintain the organisation's focus on ambidexterity. In a way it serves to caution against leaning too heavily toward exploitation because it assumed to involve less risk or financial commitment.

The forms of organising innovation demonstrate that the organisations have structurally separated their innovation and core business efforts. For example in External forms of organising, ambidextrous activities occur within the organisation

and additionally innovation occurs externally to mitigate risk. In Greenfields operations innovation is embedded in the core business (Tushman et al., 2013) as a structurally separated entity (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). In virtual isolation the individual specifies how they spend their time, which can be linked to contextual ambidexterity (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). The individual's involvement in various innovation activities provides evidence of the co-existence of different logics by allowing individuals to create that balance (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). The research findings demonstrate that black and white descriptions of structural and contextual ambidexterity are insufficient to describe how complex and dynamic organisations deal with ambidexterity (Papachroni et al., 2016).

The results support the notion that the use of different structures positively shapes the organisation's ability to effectively enable organisational ambidexterity. It contributes to organisational ambidexterity literature by proposing formal and informal structures that flexibly separate innovation and efficiency.

4.5.2 Behavioural Aspects

This research addresses an underexplored question in current literature asking whether management influences organisational ambidexterity at the business unit level (Halevi et al., 2015). Scholars have demonstrated that organisational ambidexterity positively influences organisational performance (He and Wong, 2004; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; Jansen et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2014). This study has indicated how management plays a role in contributing to that organisational performance. Although research has demonstrated how behavioural factors such as contextual ambidexterity and dynamic capabilities contribute to managing paradoxical challenges, organisations are not always successful at achieving this (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Organisations are faced with a choice between ambidextrous approaches, but how they resolve tensions is not fully understood. This gap is especially apparent in recent studies indicating limited awareness of the behavioural attributes that bring about ambidexterity (Jansen et al., 2016; Halevi et al., 2015). Consequently insight into the conditions that ensure performance and the attributes resulting in competitive advantage continues to be of interest. Research has demonstrated that a "universal set of capabilities" cannot be applied (Birkinshaw, et al., 2016), and that limited research is available on the impact of contextual ambidexterity on new product innovations (Wang and Rafiq,

2014). This notion further highlights the importance of a behavioural dimension. Thus this research advances how management mobilises the actions of individuals at different hierarchical levels. It demonstrates that management acquires the resources of individuals by creating an environment that supports their ambidextrous pursuits. And furthermore, it shows how management use the individual's skills and capabilities effectively to accomplish the organisation's goals and objectives (McCarthy and Gordon, 2011).

4.5.3 Theoretical Contributions

This empirical study used structural and contextual ambidexterity to integrate ideas on the formal and informal forms of organising innovation without adversely impacting the existing business. By enhancing our understanding of the configurations enabling organisational ambidexterity, we advance a view of dynamic ambidextrous organisations. Much research has indicated that different organisational configurations such as contextual and structural configurations enable organisational ambidexterity (Birkinshaw et al., 2016; Zimmermann et al., 2016). However, we do not fully understand how formal and informal configurations resolve paradoxical challenges or how organisations make that choice. And limited research has looked at how these different configurations can be applied together. We extend current thinking on ambidexterity with a mixed ambidextrous approach – that is a combination of approaches that are both formal and informal. This allows the organisation to adapt its approach according to the change needed, the environment it is required in and the time, skills and resources available.

In so doing we argue that a balance between structural and contextual ambidexterity may not be the optimal configuration in all instances. According to popular understanding balance implies an equal weight distribution. However, the findings suggest that an organisation may not derive benefit from an equal distribution of focus on innovation and efficiency in every instance. Some business units may derive optimal value from a 60-40% split between exploratory innovation and continuous improvement while another business unit might consider a 70-30% allocation. This does not suggest that organisations elevate one pursuit and neglect the other as is cautioned by Smith and Tushman (2005). Instead we advance the idea that varying orientations may enable the organisation to be more agile and swiftly adapt to changes in the environment. In this way the organisation

accommodates multiple conflicting organisational structures, cultures and processes within the same organisation (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). This configuration need not present innovation tensions or an endless loop of paradoxes resulting from an unbalanced focus on either innovation or efficiency (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009). Instead it presents management with opportunities to be alert to change and to adapt with flexibility and agility as the circumstances dictate. Although research has indicated that combining exploration and efficiency leads to multiple or conflicting goals (Jansen et al., 2008), the evidence provided indicates that adjusting the configuration to address a specific innovation or efficiency need ensures that multiple goals can be accommodated simultaneously.

Birkinshaw et al. (2016) indicated that previous organisational ambidexterity research has primarily focused on a singular approach to ambidexterity such as structural or contextual ambidexterity. In addition to Markides (2013) they questioned whether an optimal configuration existed. Our evidence indicates that there is no one configuration or one solution for a given organisation. However there is an optimal configuration at any one point in time. By this we mean that a specific project or team or initiative may be better served by the form of organising appropriate at the time and for the purpose it is intended for.

This research also addresses a significant distinction between organisational and individual behaviours. Although much research is available on the role of management in enabling organisational ambidexterity (Halevi et al., 2015; Carmeli and Halevi, 2009) essentially our knowledge is lacking on how management mobilises actions in individuals at lower hierarchical levels. By providing evidence of the behaviours available to simultaneously manage different strategic orientations, our research draws attention to the behavioural view of organisational ambidexterity. This is a beneficial lens to view the individual and organisational attributes used to manage paradoxes. The findings show that the creation of different forms of organising innovation requires management involvement at the strategic level of the organisation. However, we advance that the enablement thereof is executed at the organisational and individual level.

Second, we contribute to the increasingly valuable debate on the personal attributes of individuals at lower levels of the organisation. Greater implementation success arises when individuals are motivated to participate in ambidextrous pursuits (Garud et al., 2011). The findings indicate that individuals are not motivated

purely because of pride, but because they are able to contribute to the strategic objectives of the team and by extension the organisation. Literature indicates that organisations sustain growth when individuals are encouraged to create opportunities for innovation (Garud et al., 2011). The findings substantiate this notion that individuals place emphasis on the value and contribution of their actions. Jansen et al. (2016) propose that this is supported by a resource-based view of ambidexterity where organisational success is attributed to the impact of resources, skills and knowledge. Our arguments and subsequent findings support the idea that individuals derive meaning from their work by implementing ideas, adding value and observing the outcome of their actions. To support the notion that individual level behaviour has strategic significance for management (Jansen et al., 2016), the evidence shows that individuals are driven to achieve the organisation's bottom-line targets, growth objectives and new business opportunities. Consequently this research advances the contribution of individual behavioural dimensions to the enablement of ambidexterity.

Third, although scholars have considered that organisations select one mode of enablement over another (Birkinshaw et al., 2016), we provide empirical evidence of the different forms of organising available. We empirically substantiate claims of different formal and informal organisational structures comprising of social structures that influence how individuals work together. The findings indicate that informal structures are shaped by individuals' actions, interactions and behaviours. This influences how individuals work ambidextrously. This supports previous research that the formal structures reflect the fixed rules, procedures and governance within which individuals work, which enables and constrains them (Garud et al., 2011). Thus multiple structures both formal and informal and a mixed ambidextrous approach help organisations to simultaneously navigate the seemingly disparate requirements of innovation and efficiency (Simsek, 2009).

A significant contribution of this research is that organisations should not vest the pursuit of innovation solely in the forms of organising or in the mode of implementation. Instead, we advance that the successful implementation of innovation is tied to organisational ambidexterity and should not be considered in isolation. And finally, we propose that the enablement of organisational ambidexterity is seen as a social construction and should be vested in the people enabling it rather than the thing contextualising it. Thus, to enable ambidexterity, enable people.

4.5.4 Practical Implications

This study also offers practical implications for management practice. Firstly, this research offers insights into the choices available to management to ensure more successful adaption to change. A significant insight is that the available organisational structures, to separate innovation and efficiency, should not dictate how the organisation addresses paradoxes. Instead the organisation should proactively select the most appropriate mode of enablement to achieve their desired outcome. A further insight is that both formal and informal organising structures can be used interchangeably to enable organisational ambidexterity.

Secondly, a further insight highlights the key attributes that individuals and management possess that are instrumental to resolving paradoxes. Therefore managers need to display awareness of the contributory influence of their actions on the behaviours of individuals at different organisational levels. This awareness can assist management in creating an environment of inclusion where individuals' contributions are acknowledged and valued. A final managerial insight is that risk-taking need not be large-scale but without risk-taking the organisation limits success. Also, management should actively match the organisation and individuals' beliefs during the recruitment process.

4.5.5 Limitations and Future Research

Although this research contributes to better understanding organisational ambidexterity in dynamic environments, it is not without limitations. The research was based in the UK technology-driven industries. It would therefore be interesting to observe whether similar results are generalisable across other dynamic industries. Gaining access into large multinationals is not without its challenges. Access to the different divisions within the multinationals was at the discretion of the respective directors. Therefore it is acknowledged that other divisions within the same organisation may operate very differently. Also considering that the case study organisations investigated are multinationals with a global footprint, an organisation-wide study was not possible within the research period.

The findings from this study also offer opportunities for future research. Although we have begun to understand the influence of management on actions at lower hierarchical levels, further research is required to understand how these microcosms are interconnected to bring about the multilevel enactment of organisational ambidexterity. Also the forms of organising emerged from the available data and reflect the views of respondents. These are indicative of the case companies under investigation. Future studies may further delve into these forms of organising to determine if they are exhaustive or specifically linked to certain organisations. A further potential avenue of research lies at the individual level. Most research pertaining to individuals often relate to either individual managers or lack application in practice (Good and Michel, 2013; Keller and Weibler, 2015). This creates an opportunity for further ambidexterity research taking into consideration the behaviour, motivation and actions of individuals, the organisational context enabling it and the practices at their disposal. In addition, scholars will benefit from better understanding the social context in which ambidexterity occurs because people are social beings who enable ambidexterity.

4.5.6 Concluding Remarks

This research addresses an important paradox – we do not know enough about how ambidextrous organisations manage innovation without negatively impacting its existing business. And we do not know enough about the organising behaviours used to manage these challenges. The findings suggest that a mixed ambidextrous approach allows the organisation to pursue innovation and efficiency simultaneously. The findings also point to the significance of behavioural influences at both the managerial and individual levels to manage paradoxes.

Thus to fulfil the promise of organisational ambidexterity, there is a continuous need to manage paradoxical challenges. Should we consider theory at the expense of practice, our understanding of how and why organisations adapt to change will have little relevance and even less impact.

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Table 4.2. Annexure 1. Brief Overview of Case Studies

Telecoms Organisations*	Company A	Company B	Company C
Primary Focus	Mobile and Fixed Line Provider	Mobile and Fixed Network Provider	Mobile Service Provider
Number of Employees	10 000 – 20 000	10 000 – 20 000	20 000 – 50 000
Strategic Direction	To be the best	To be a cost effective provider	To be a market leader
Global Footprint	1 - 5 Countries	1 - 5 Countries	20 - 30 countries
Presence	Largest in 2 sectors	Largest in all operating countries	Largest in all operating countries

Technology Organisations*	Company A	Company B	Company C
Primary Focus	IT and Networking Equipment Provider	Science and Technology Agent	Engineers, Manufactures and Distributes Technology
Number of Employees	50 000 – 75 000	0 – 5 000	0 – 5 000
Strategic Direction	To be the leading enabler	To drive innovation	To provide customisation
Global Footprint	Worldwide	1 – 5 Countries	Located in 1 – 5 Countries (Serves customers worldwide)
Presence	Worldwide Leader	Monopoly in all markets	Leader in niche market

* Because non-disclosure agreements have been signed more specific details cannot be divulged as it may lead to identifying the organisations. All details included in the table were obtained on the organisations respective websites in March 2017.

Table 4.3. Annexure 2. Forms of Organising

Telecoms Organisations			
Forms of Organising	Company A	Company B	Company C
Incubators	Not mentioned by respondents	"As we move through design and build, we sometimes start to realise that actually the market shifted. It's too difficult to implement it practically within the business or even from a regulatory perspective" (Director)	Not mentioned by respondents
When Used		Under extraordinary circumstances where internal governance or external restrictions prevent undertaking innovation.	
Why Used		Used when the perceived risk of innovation impacts existing business. "But what we're useless at as a traditional Telco is what do you call it, creative destruction. [That is] creating a space for new products by consciously removing stuff that's not making money" (Director)	
Greenfields	"Yes, it's a reflection of managing a business that is slightly smaller so we can be a bit nimble, try things quickly, tentative learn, improve and we know if we get it wrong it's not going to be a disaster or lose millions of pounds worth of value." (Head of Department)	"So although we are small we are growing a lot therefore we're almost more of an entrepreneurial [team] compared to some other teams who are very well established and have much bigger businesses to manage... My concern is you couldn't put for example people who are entrepreneurial in the other teams". (Head of Acquisitions)	"So [it's a] multi-tiered set-up. So for the quick-wins stuff I think we should have an absolute delegation of responsibility.... The team can very quickly deliver. That is something which you delegate responsibility. You provide some funding to drive some of these ongoing quick win implementations". (Head of Section)
When Used	When the larger team has governance	Smaller teams are perceived to be agile	When the team needs to ensure both

	restrictions, a smaller team can work outside of those restrictions. By focussing on innovation the teams can trial an idea quickly and if necessary discard it quickly if unsuccessful.	because they are not critical functions and can work outside of restrictions while larger teams are perceived to be less flexible and bound by governance because of its importance to the business	innovation for future-focused business potential and maintain its current source of income.
Why Used	Innovation involves taking financial risks. A smaller team can prototype an idea until the value of innovation can be established.	When there is a conflict between business practice and business needs. When the business is focussed on maintaining its existing products and services but management are concerned that insufficient time is devoted to innovative new ideas.	An opportunity exists to test and implement innovation that may have immediate returns
Virtual Isolation	<i>"...[For] the long-term innovative stuff which is not so well understood, the really innovative type stuff. What you need in that case is a well timed controlled process. Which is: you get some funding, you do a time-walled activity, and you prove the concept within 6 months." (Head of Department)</i>	<i>"Of course there should be a dragon den set-up where you poll the ideas and every quarter you have the opportunity to run one thing and you select and you go through the process" (Enterprise Architect)</i>	<i>"... You can select 1 idea and you have 15 days... to get the funding for that. You get the funding for 6 months. You do something within those 6 months. If it's successful, it's successful. You then have the discretion of how to take that further." (Strategy and Architecture Specialist)</i>
When Used	Where one-off project ideas arise. Management may select a team to establish a project working on a specific idea.	Individuals have an opportunity to raise ideas via an online organisational system. These ideas are voted on at departmental meetings and the successful idea prototyped.	When an individual has an idea that has the potential to add value to the organisation, they draft an initial business case to get funding to test the idea for a limited period of time.
Why Used	The scope of the project falls outside of the responsibility of any team and an informal, cross-functional team can test the viability of the idea.	Management believes that this process allows individuals to raise innovative ideas that may otherwise be lost.	To commit resources and funding a business case is required and proof that the idea will deliver value to the organisation.

Technology Forms of organising			
Forms of Organising	Company A	Company B	Company C
Incubators	"Not all the innovation comes internally, that's definitely not the case. So external innovation and partnering outside of [Company] is key in the next few years and the type of harnessing of the start-ups and incubators." (Specialist Solutions Architect)	"We've got an incubator and I'm a technical mentor to a start-up... That whole incubator side [is great] because I see new young companies coming up with great disruptive ideas and I find that fascinating and much quicker than [Company] is at doing stuff and getting stuff to market." (Specialist Solutions Architect)	"Google tried it and it failed. The market wasn't ready, that was six or seven years ago. It was too early. But now it's back from a different company." (Specialist Engineer)
When Used	An exchange of mentorship and resources for access to new ideas.	Larger organisations view partnering with start-ups as free from corporate restrictions that may inhibit risk-taking	When the innovation has the potential to disrupt the market, but the market reaction to the disruption is unknown.
Why Used	Opportunity to see where the market is headed and to acquire that technology before the competition.	Large organisations grow by acquiring smaller start-ups, which adds revenue to their bottom-line.	The risk of failure is high but the potential for reward if the innovation is successful is equally high.
Greenfields	"We...look at ourselves in two ways: One, as a separate entity so we can...take risks and try something new and do something that doesn't follow the normal standards and...we maintain an interface [with a number of other Company products]...that's what maintains almost like a start-up or small company mentality within this huge company." (Director) 60	"When you have a product that is mainstream there's a whole set of compliance and governance around that... But I think that is the biggest barriers we have, we are not agile enough as we enter new markets. And we also need to be both agile...and realise that these successes don't happen overnight." (Solutions Architect)	
When Used	When teams feel inhibited by	When management needs to make	

	governance restrictions	ambidextrous decisions.	
Why Used	Need to circumvent the existing structures.	Management realise the value in pursuing both exploration and exploitation simultaneously.	
Virtual Isolation	"One of the advantages of being in a company as large as [Company] is that you can carve off smaller teams who can coalesce and come together to achieve one goal, do some research and build something." (Director)	"At the end of every release, there are time slots that are dedicated to exploring, experimenting, iteration, innovation. It's about two weeks where everyone in the group can dedicate to search, experiment, prototype, and at the end of the two weeks you present what you've done. And out of those trials and experiments, there may be something that we can bring forward and make into a product." (Product Owner)	"We don't necessarily innovate ourselves. And part of our executives' challenge to us is to change that perception. One of the ways to do that is to form small teams and go and try a few things." (Director)
When Used	When a project needs to be established to achieve a specific objective.	After set targets and deliverables are met, individuals are free to use specified time for any activity they use.	When the executive team want to create a culture and environment that fosters innovation without impacting the rest of the business.
Why Used	Different people from different teams and functions need to work together on a specific project to ensure its success.	Management believes this period is "about empowering individuals" That happy employees are more productive employees.	To ensure that the pursuit of exploration and exploitation occurs simultaneously.

Appendix 4A. Statement of Authorship

This declaration concerns the article entitled:							
Organisational Ambidexterity: Navigating Paradoxical Challenges							
Publication status (tick one)							
Draft Manuscript	Submitted		In Review		Accepted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published
Publication details (reference)	British Academy of Management (2017), Coventry, UK.						
Candidate's contribution to the paper (detailed, and also given as a percentage).	<p>The candidate contributed to/ considerably contributed to/ predominantly executed the</p> <p>Formulation of ideas: 70%</p> <p>Design of methodology: 100%</p> <p>Experimental work: 100%</p> <p>Presentation of data in journal format: 100%</p>						
Statement from Candidate	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research Candidature.						
Signed	Natasha Rose				Date	10 April 2017	

CHAPTER 5

Connecting the Dots between Practitioners, Practices and Praxis To Enable Organisational Ambidexterity

The author wishes to express gratitude to the editors and anonymous reviewers of the EURAM 2017 strategy as practice stream for their insightful comments that have been incorporated into this paper.

ABSTRACT

Drawing on strategy as practice, it is argued that the organisation's ability to simultaneously seize and deploy strategic objectives at a macro level is attributable to the interconnected micro level behaviours, actions, and motivations. This research considers how practitioners, their interactions and practices, are fundamentally intertwined to produce strategic level outcomes. Using Whittington's (2006) practitioners, practices and praxis framework to contribute empirically to research, it is argued that interlinkages between these produce behavioural, contextual and directional outcomes. In doing so it provides causal explanations of how and why practitioners at multiple organisational levels enable organisational ambidexterity. This study contributes to literature by proposing habitude as a behavioural construct, execution as a contextual mechanism and exchange as a directional construct to derive explanations of the interactions that enable organisational ambidexterity. A multilevel study across 6 organisations in the UK ITC sector is undertaken to take a practice view of organisational ambidexterity.

Key Words:

Practitioners, Practices, Praxis, Strategy-as-practice, Organisational Ambidexterity

5.1 Introduction

Organisational ambidexterity remains a popular research topic because of its interest to scholars across multiple disciplines and its promise of performance returns to practitioners. Previous research has indicated that ambidexterity is contingent on the organisation's environment (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996), its management (Jansen et al., 2016; Halevi et al., 2015) and behavioural capabilities (Teece et al., 2016; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). This paper takes a strategy as practice view to increase knowledge and understanding of the phenomena (Bouty et al., 2012). Organisational ambidexterity, viewed from a practice perspective, takes meaning from the organisational context it operates in. It considers how the practices, actions and interactions of individuals influence the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation to sense and seize opportunities (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). Jarzabkowski et al. (2013, p. 37) contend that organisational ambidexterity remains an empty promise because: "it remains an organisational level construct that neither connects to the institutional-level, nor to the practical actions and interactions with which individuals enact institutions". Although understanding these components and how they enable ambidexterity is essential, it is a combination of the interconnected actions and interactions that aid management in effective decision-making that produces firm performance (Sioncke and Parmentier, 2007).

Strategy as a situated socially accomplished activity is no longer seen merely as something organisations have; it is concerned with what an organisation and its actors do (Balogun et al., 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Jarzabkowski, 2005). While strategy as practice has commonality with organisational ambidexterity (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) and a microfoundations perspective of strategy (Eisenhardt et al., 2010), its focus is primarily to understand the ways in which the organisation, its activities and environment enables individual actors to make decisions (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Thus the means selected to implement ambidexterity alone is insufficient to produce the desired outcomes. This research recognises that individuals create a balance between seemingly incompatible tensions. Recent research by Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) found that scholars have very little understanding of how this balance is created, or what individuals do to enact competing logics. They argue that scholars have not been able to practically resolve the tensions of competing dualities.

Practically speaking, theories that cannot aggregate across different levels of analysis to the macro level have limited value for the key recipients of micro level research - the managers (Devinney, 2013). Ultimately, managers are concerned with how lower-level actions and activities affect the performance of the organisation. How individual level actors contribute to strategic level outcomes requires thinking about individual behaviour, cognition, motivation and its interplay with the organisation's resources and workflow. Research has associated behaviour with motivation and skill but these have been specifically linked to the behaviour of management (Mom et al., 2015). Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioner framework presents the lens through which practitioner interaction is viewed. It highlights the interconnections between focal points to provide explanations, patterns and causal links explaining organisational ambidexterity in practice. Therefore to understand what these practitioner-level actions and interactions are the interplay of mechanisms within the organisation needs to be observed. If micro elements have causal properties it implies interconnected links at different levels of the organisation and aggregation from the micro to the macro level.

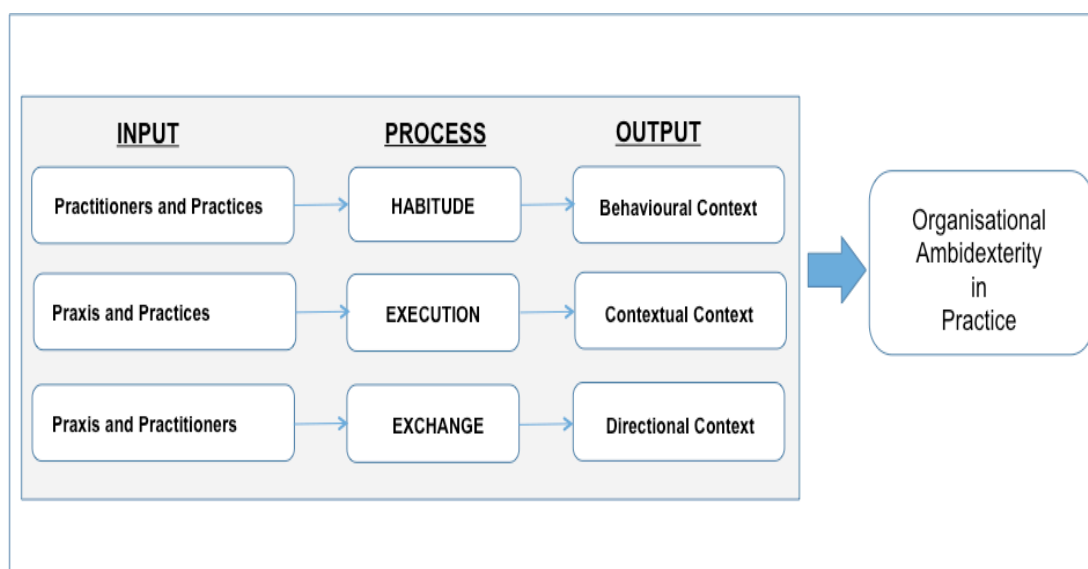
Although current studies have been valuable in informing our understanding of ambidexterity, scholars have remarked that shortcomings in our understanding exist. These include further research on the behaviours that support organisational ambidexterity (Rogan and Mors, 2014) and the environmental dynamics in the enablement of organisational ambidexterity (Halevi et al., 2015) because current literature is incomplete in offering solutions for enabling organisational ambidexterity effectively in dynamic or complex situations (Jansen et al., 2016). However, these requests for greater understanding are not unique or isolated gaps in our understanding. These gaps are linked and their interconnectedness may offer explanations for the enablement of ambidexterity in practice. Understanding the interconnectedness poses a valuable contribution to our understanding of ambidexterity because it has been noted that: "we need to better understand how organisations can capitalise on interdependencies between logics" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013, p. 38). This research points to the interconnections between constructs to demonstrate how organisations can adapt to the demands of exploration and exploitation. This is important because at present scholars are as yet unable: "to suggest practical solutions to the puzzle of integrating contradictory prescriptions". (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013, p. 37). It is by demonstrating the linkages between practitioners, their practices and the organisational praxis that we may provide

answers to where the integration of exploration and exploitation occurs as well as how that integration occurs (Jarzabkowski, et al. 2013).

This paper considers the interlinkages between micro elements to produce macro level results. More specifically Whittington's (2006) framework provides a starting point to review the links between praxis and practices, practices and practitioners and the link between practitioners and praxis. This is to understand what occurs at these interconnections and how it contributes to enabling organisational ambidexterity. In addition it spurs an investigation into the occurrences at the nexus of praxis, practices and practitioners. Thus the research questions investigated are: What interlinkages influence organisational ambidexterity? And how do these interlinkages shape organisational ambidexterity? It is argued that individuals, through their actions and interactions, working within the organisational context use the available tools at their disposal to enact organisational ambidexterity. This assertion draws on the idea that the enactment of organisational ambidexterity is more effective if approached as "interlinked and practical activities" (Whittington et al., 2006, p. 615). It is proposed that interlinking micro elements using Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioner framework, will produce patterns to help management fulfil the performance promise of organisational ambidexterity. These patterns will demonstrate how organisational ambidexterity occurs, why certain practices enable it and highlight the organisational context necessary for it to flourish. The importance of context is to understand the conditions where managers can be most effective in creating an environment that supports ambidexterity (Mom et al., 2015) and empowers practitioners.

In this way management can capitalise on the skills, capabilities and abilities already at its disposal. Thus the aim of this research is to shed light on three contributory enablers: (1) habitude as the foundation of practitioners' behaviour, (2) execution as the process of creating a favourable climate and (3) exchange, where mutual benefit and goals directs the organisation's focus (Figure 5.1, page 152).

Figure 5.1. The Interlinkages Reflecting How Ambidexterity Is Enabled



To empirically explore how the interconnected micro elements produce the multilevel enactment of organisational ambidexterity, six case studies were conducted in the ITC (Information, Technology and Communications) sector. This sector provides a rich setting for balancing tensions between current profitability and future longevity (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2011).

The contribution of this paper is in terms of organisational ambidexterity theory. It is proposed that organisational ambidexterity is even more successful when its enactment stems from the interconnected strategising behaviours (Jarzabkowski, 2009), organisational behaviours and practitioner behaviours. The research follows the conceptualisation of strategising as the doing of strategy (Johnson et al., 2003). Strategising refers to strategy work, which “relies on organisational and other practices that significantly affect both the process and outcome of resulting strategies” (Vaara and Whittington, 2012, p. 286). In so doing we provide explanations of habitude as a behavioural construct, execution as having contextual meaning and exchange as a directional construct that gives meaning to the intertwined contexts that enable organisational ambidexterity. Theoretically this ambidexterity research intersects organisation and strategy research by advancing the effect that praxis, practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006) have on the enablement of organisational ambidexterity (Figure 5.2, page 153).

Figure 5.2. Research Situated in Framework



Source: Adapted from Whittington (2006)

5.2 Theoretical Background

5.2.1 Organisational Ambidexterity

Organisational ambidexterity enables management in dynamic environments to balance current business demands while adapting to environmental changes to secure their future existence (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). It entails combining seemingly incompatible tensions that lead to the presence of multiple goals (Jansen et al., 2008). This explains why it is difficult to achieve in practice. Yet change, complexity and ambiguity illustrate circumstances where organisations are more likely to succeed at organisational ambidexterity (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). And once successful, organisational ambidexterity contributes positively to organisational performance in dimensions such as revenue, profit, customer satisfaction and new product introductions (Sarkees and Hulland 2009; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004).

Organisations are complex institutions, and complexity arises when seemingly incompatible logics compete for the organisation's limited resources. Smets and colleagues (2012) caution that different modes of ambidexterity or ways in which integration occurs cannot adequately explain ambidexterity in organisations with complex structures. They propose that different logics can coexist by allowing individuals to create that balance. This research considers that a balance (between future and current business logics) is inherent in the individuals enabling

ambidexterity and in the actions and interactions of individuals acting within the organisation's environment.

Organisational ambidexterity scholars have thus far focused research on the independent macro elements of ambidexterity: the management thereof and the role of its senior management team with limited emphasis on the micro elements. Also previous research has looked at these elements independently while ignoring the greater implications of the interconnected nature of constructs that give rise to ambidexterity. Thus, extant studies lend themselves to understanding the internal environment, systems and processes of the organisation. Literature has not fully explored the detailed practises enabling organisational ambidexterity (Turner et al., 2013), and its management behaviours (Jansen et al., 2016), to fully achieve organisational ambidexterity.

To date available organisational ambidexterity literature has also not fully explored the detailed actions that individuals undertake to achieve ambidexterity. Much of the research on individual actors enabling organisational ambidexterity has looked at the ways in which managers achieve ambidexterity (Turner et al., 2015). Therefore a need exists to shed light on the contributory elements of ambidexterity's successful implementation. This is to establish the extent to which individuals influence and are influenced by their environment.

5.2.2 Strategy As Practice

Strategy as practice is the lens through which the enablement of organisational ambidexterity is studied. It concerns the interconnection between praxis, practices and practitioners. Therefore this study involves managing tensions: "studying the micro level while aiming at understanding the macro" Vaara and Whittington (2012, p. 325). Strategy as practice is therefore concerned with detailed aspects of strategising: how practitioners think, behave, act and interact. This includes who practitioners are, what they do, which tools they use (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) and which organisational activities enable organisational ambidexterity. Strategy as practice research is foundational in understanding how and why strategising about organisational ambidexterity takes place. It provides powerful analytical tools because at its core lies a concentration on action, interaction and motion as well as the dynamics within these (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007). By

placing practices and practitioners as the focal point of research, strategy as practice endeavours to aid management in attaining practical relevance (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) while fostering practice-relevant scholarship (Antonacopoulou and Balogun, 2010).

Strategy as practice is concerned with a range of organisational outcomes such as organisation performance (Vaara and Whittington, 2012); effect of strategy tools (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008); the roles of actors (Whittington et al., 2011; Mantere and Vaara, 2008; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007); and understanding the process of strategy making (Liu and Maitlis, 2014; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011). Strategy as practice is credited with seeing the interrelatedness of common tensions between: cognition and action, structure and agency, individual and organisational levels (Reckwitz, 2002). Although this research investigates the enablement of organisational ambidexterity, Seidl and Whittington (2014, p. 1407) caution that researchers should counter against “micro-isolation” which they propose is the “tendency to explain local activities in their own terms” without considering its context. Within this paper, organisational context refers to the environment and organisational conditions that enable organisational ambidexterity. This understanding paves the way to view the connectedness between the individuals that execute the organisation’s strategy to pursue organisational ambidexterity, the organisational context within which they work and the resources at their disposal. As Vaara and Whittington (2012) explain: “The power of strategy as practice lies in its ability to explain how strategy-making is enabled and constrained by prevailing organisational and societal practices” (p. 285).

Literature has shown that individual behaviour is contingent upon the interconnected environment where the interconnected actions involved in strategy making depend on the practices of individuals (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009). Thus to understand organisational ambidexterity in practice, this research must concern itself with the individuals formulating the strategy; the environment within which the flow of work occurs and the specific practices that enable it. A strategy as practice perspective improves understanding of how individuals are linked to the organisational context and how their practices bring about the strategic outcomes of organisational ambidexterity. Because organisations are comprised of individuals (Felin and Foss, 2005), it follows that individuals must enact the organisation’s strategy to pursue organisational ambidexterity.

5.2.3 Micro-Macro Level Linkages

Microfoundations cannot be viewed exclusively on the individual level because strategic goals matter in a wider context (Foss and Lindenberg, 2013). The opposite is true as well. Devinney (2013) explains that decision-making cannot be explained at the level of the organisation because in most cases it is not the organisation making decisions but the individuals. Consequently, Devinney (2013) proposes considering occurrences between and across different levels of analysis. This is significant to organisational ambidexterity research as much of the current literature is focused on “what” ambidexterity is: its enablers, antecedents and management (O’Reilly and Tushman, 2013).

A strategy as practice lens offers a framework to develop a multilevel model of practice that emerges from the actions of everyday work because individual actions have strategic consequences for the organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2005). These actions are consolidated within the organisational environment and transcend to the practice level of the organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Smets et al. (2012) found that the everyday, mundane activities of individuals have impetus at the organisational level resulting in organisational change. Their seminal work accounted for the multilevel interplay between the organisation level and micro level actions. Despite this focus, limited research is available connecting the micro activities and the macro environment it operates in. Kozlowski and Klein (2000) state that essentially multilevel studies are designed to bridge micro and macro perspectives. Thus seeking causal explanations of strategic outcomes invites an understanding of the micro elements that underpin it across different levels of the organisation (Kozlowski and Klein, 2000).

Although theory assumes that individuals are always and everywhere in the frame (Foss and Lindenberg, 2013), individual interests cannot be considered independently without linking individual level actions to strategic level outcomes. O’Reilly and Tushman (2011, p. 8) found that management’s ability to implement and effect an ambidextrous strategy would be better advanced by understanding of the micro elements that supports it. This call for further micro level organisational ambidexterity analysis is repeated by Turner et al. (2013). This call by scholars should not be seen in isolation but an understanding of the micro level is intended as a catalyst to provide strategic level explanations. It is therefore a way of connecting. Thus to understand how the organisation strategises about

organisational ambidexterity, a need exists to understand the interconnection between the micro elements that underpin it and the multilevel execution thereof. This enquiry formed the basis of an empirical investigation.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Research Context

This study looks at how the interlinked micro level activities produce macro levels outcomes explaining how ambidexterity occurs in the ITC sector. Research in the ITC sector is well established in social science (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Eisenhardt, 1989) for exploratory research (Yin, 2013). Similar to Omidvar and Kislov (2016), this research applied a practice lens to the qualitative multi-case research. In addition we were guided by previous studies that identified ambidexterity to be beneficial to large multinationals (Zimmermann et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2007). The researcher's previous management experience in the ITC sector was essential in understanding the environment in which decisions about organisational ambidexterity are made. This knowledge, supported by literature, informed the research questions framed to illicit the participants' experiences. The research was also situated in the ITC industry because it is a fast-moving, dynamic industry reflecting complex organisational structures where competing tensions need to be balanced to enable the organisation to capitalise on current and future opportunities. The industry also represents organisations with multiple organisational structures, governance parameters, and conflicting internal goals. The competitive nature of the industry means that senior management must continuously look at the organisation's long-term performance and balance the limited resources at their disposal.

The case companies were selected because of their leadership position in each of the markets they operated in. The three technology focused organisations, ranged from mid-sized to large organisations, are located in several countries. Similarly the three technology based organisations ranged from medium to large multinationals. These companies differed in strategic focus from emphasis on the customer, being the largest in their market, to being a leader in their market. Based on these factors, the companies represented the application of diverse strategies

focused on both exploratory and exploitative programmes to ensure success. The intention was to develop insights into how organisations faced with constant organisational complexity and paradox as well as internal and external drivers, enact ambidexterity in practice.

This empirical study was conducted using a qualitative research design following the work of Eisenhardt (1989) on multiple case company research. Data was collected at multiple levels across the six case companies for this multilevel investigation (Eisenhardt, 1989). Given the complexity in the analysis of the multiple source data collected, it called for reflection of the process followed (Balogun et al., 2003) and the use of Nvivo software to ensure reliability (McGuiggan and Lee, 2008). Collecting data on practitioners and their practices within their specific work environment lends itself to practitioner-led research (Balogun et al., 2003). The significance of reflectivity in practice-driven research is because practice is initiated from the perspective of an insider (Gomez and Bouty, 2011) and adds context to the lived-experiences of practitioners (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). In this way the researcher is able to “speak the same language” as the practitioners being interviewed.

5.3.2 Data Collection

Given the competitive nature of sector, non-disclosure agreements were signed. Consequently the directors of the specific functions within the case study companies approved the research. Within the telecoms companies we were provided with a gatekeeper who introduced us to respondents via a snowballing technique. The technology companies similarly provided a gatekeeper who provided the email addresses of respondents at different levels of the organisation from specialist level (engineer, analyst) to management, department heads and executive level. The respondents included managers and senior managers with no subordinates. To ensure objectivity and impartiality (Pratt 2009), each respondent was contacted and asked for their willingness to participate in the study. Other than the initial approval, the directors had no further involvement in the process.

Data was collected from six organisations in the ITC sector. The data sources primarily consisted of: (1) 24 respondents in the technology sector, of which 10 were specialists, 4 were managers, 5 heads of functions, and 5 directors. (2) 23

respondents in the telecoms sector included 1 specialist, 4 managers, 7 senior managers, 8 heads of functions and 3 directors. The data was therefore gathered from 47 semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes (See Appendix C. Interview Respondents on page 226). The wide array of respondents at diverse hierarchical levels ensured perspectives of ambidexterity at different organisational levels. This was valuable because the study sought to investigate how and why individual actors, their actions and practices shape the way the organisation strategises about organisational ambidexterity. Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioner framework was used as a basis for thematic coding (McGuiggan and Lee, 2008), and these constructs were confirmed in the dataset. In addition to providing support for the use of the framework, the identified variables countered possible researcher bias. A further bias mitigating mechanism was ensuring that respondents across the case companies reflected diverse levels of the organisation (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Respondents were interviewed, some multiple times, via their preferred interview method – videoconference, teleconference or in person.

The respondents were all time constrained and expressed a preference to use the technology of their organisations such as telecoms respondents preferred telephone interviews and technology respondents preferred their legacy technology platform. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. In addition the interview method enabled the taking of notes during the interview and the writing-up was completed almost immediately after the interviews. The semi-structured interview followed an interview protocol consisting of four sections: exploration, exploitation, implementation of ambidexterity and ambidexterity decisions. Because many respondents were unfamiliar with the terms exploration and exploitation, we first established that ambidexterity occurred in the organisation. We asked respondents to relate to March's (1991) definition of ambidexterity where exploration refers to innovation, discovery, experimentation and risk-taking; and exploitation implies improvement, implementation, execution, efficiency and refinement by providing examples of these. All respondents met these criteria. This provided familiarisation with the terminology used by the respondents and ensured terminology parity (Fontana and Frey, 1998). To reduce the risk of bias and to reveal real-life experiences the respondents were asked to relate actual examples rather than hypothetical incidents (Miller et al., 1997). Verification of these accounts was possible by asking similar questions to the other respondents (Faems et al., 2008). Following the example of Zimmermann et al. (2015) we immediately used the

semi-structured interview responses across the case companies to triangulate the data and in this way we reduced potential concerns of retrospective bias. This was possible because both technology and telecoms respondents were interviewed during the same period. Interviews were scheduled solely on an availability basis following on the respondents' schedules and were not planned around the case company or industry.

5.3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis was structured following the approach suggested by Gioia et al. (2013), for open-ended inductive research. Following on from previous inductive research (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Sonenshein, 2014; Huy et al., 2014) we followed a process of iterative analysis resulting in constant analysis of emerging data (Williams and Shepherd, 2016). The first phase of the data analysis began with open-ended coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1968), using user-centric words (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). The focus was on how respondents perceived ambidexterity in their business functions. During this phase no attempt was made to cleanse the data to enable a clear view of the respondents' lived experiences (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). Given the multiple data sources the notes taken during the interviews served to understand the conditions that shaped the respondents' behaviour and where necessary follow up discussions provided further clarity. In this way the categorisation and labelling of first order codes reflect the respondent terms. The initial first-order codes covered diverse topics including process constraints, the decision-making criteria, empowerment, exploration and improvement, business focus and organisational objectives, and the conditions in which they operated. During this process we identified ideas replicated across the data. We noticed that certain codes were distinct, yet similar and linked to other codes. For example "implementations" related to both "individual implementation decisions", "information share from management" and process related decisions such as "why it fails". To ensure that all nuances were captured the initial codes were linked using Nvivo software and in so doing created parent-child relationships. Within this analysis we were able to differentiate between different approaches to ambidexterity across the data sample.

We were able to relate Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioner framework to the emerging codes. This enabled us to group some first order codes

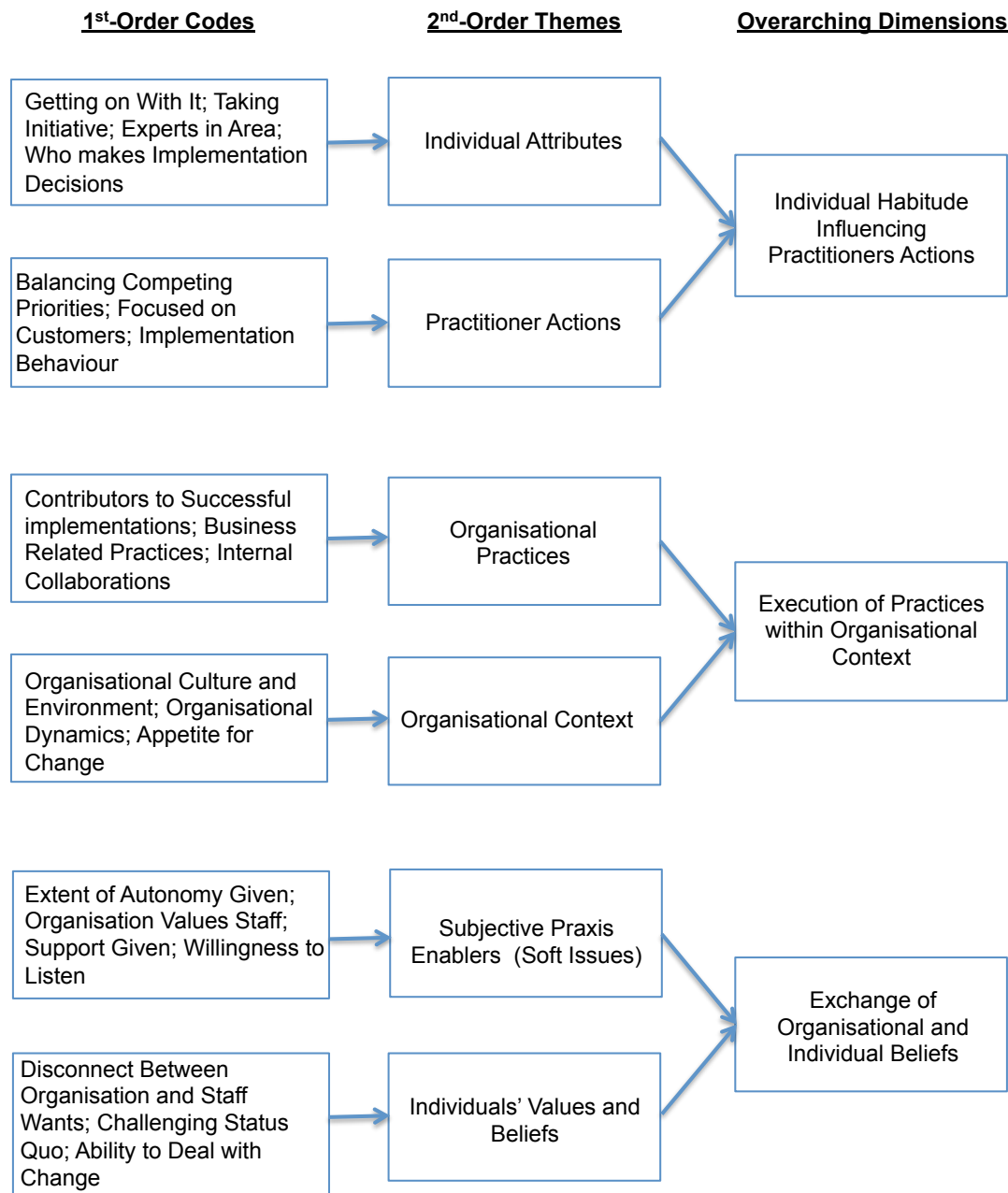
on practices into practices undertaken by individuals as well as practices enabled by management. We also observed that practices were influenced by the context in which they occurred. In this way our dataset could be linked Whittington's (2006) framework. These insights from the data set evolved into what ultimately became second order themes. Following Williams and Shepherd (2016), the first-order codes formed the foundation from which the raw data was integrated, resulting in an interpretation of the data and linked to the theoretical framing of Whittington's (2006) framework. Following the initial categorisation we considered the nuances, similarities and differences across the segments and assessed a grouping for each code (praxis, practices, practitioners). This enabled the data to be "arranged in appropriate classifications" (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, p.13) and based on literature – the Whittington (2006) framework. As with the first-order codes, the second-order codes also followed an iterative process going between the raw data and the emerging themes to code and recode the data. By coding the data multiple times it instilled confidence in the second-order theoretical themes. By integrating the first-order codes into the theoretical themes, 6 over-arching theoretical themes emerged (See Figure 5.3 on page 162).

Following the analysis process of Williams and Shepherd (2016), the final phase of the analysis involved abstracting the second-order themes into higher-order theoretical dimensions. This too followed a process of iteration between the data and emerging themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). We observed distinct linkages between the second-order themes and identified specific patterns to explain how the case organisations operated in practice. In line with other inductive research (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Gioia et al., 2013) we revisited our theoretical perspective, Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioner framework and observed the emerging patterns across the data. In this way the theoretical framework formed the foundation on which the emerging patterns of interconnectedness were based. As a consequence we identified three overarching aggregate dimensions: habitude, execution and exchange reflected in Figure 5.3 on page 162.

To ensure qualitative rigor in our analysis the Gioia method (2013) offers several practices. Firstly we derived broader theoretical themes from an analysis of the first-order raw data. Also, by providing illustrative quotes, the findings demonstrate insight into the data (Sonnenshein, 2014). In addition the findings are displayed in a manner to structure and clarify the findings (Gioia et al., 1994).

Furthermore the findings result in a dynamic model illustrating the integration of theoretical constructs that give rise to the theoretical contribution of the paper (Williams and Shepherd, 2016; Sonnenshein, 2014; Huy et al., 2014; Gioia et al., 2013). Table 5.1 (see page 172) reflects a summary of the findings. These findings are discussed further in the next section.

Figure 5.3. Data Structure



5.4 Findings

The findings suggest patterns explaining how and why practitioners act and interact as they do to enable organisational ambidexterity within the confines of the organisational context and the practices at their disposal. This section reflects the interlinkages between practitioners, praxis and practices and demonstrates the occurrence at the nexus between these constructs (Figure 5.4). The examples offered are demonstrative of the interview respondents' experiences.

Figure 5.4. Model Depicting Interlinkages between Micro elements



5.4.1 Interlinkages between Practitioners and Practices

“Habitude” is conceptualised by the skill, behaviour, experience and knowledge of practitioners who influence and are influenced by organisational practices. It follows the general dictionary descriptions of habitude as: a way of behaving or a customary condition of practice. Greek Philosopher Plato in a 1963 translation interpreted habitude as “experience”. He found that experience coupled with an explanation of “why”, resulted in knowledge. The value of this interconnection is that a practice approach to organisational ambidexterity involves the resources at the organisation’s disposal. Mom et al. (2015) raised concerns about the availability of sufficient research linking manager’s experience to their ability or motivation to be ambidextrous. This is relevant to all practitioners as well.

The findings indicated that once practitioners met set targets, they were provided with a period of time to pursue activities outside of their core role. Although this practice occurred in both the telecoms and technology companies, it was more prevalent in what the organisations termed “core roles” such as engineering. This practice was more selectively used for “support roles” such as a data analysis. But what was evident in all the case organisations was that the director of the function determined the practices for the team although team members used those practices in different ways. The time allocated to pursue independent activities provided opportunities to simultaneously balance dual priorities. One respondent illustrated how practitioners sequentially exploit and explore:

“We’ve done an innovation sprint, so people can down tools and do whatever they like for two weeks” (Manager).

Respondents intimated that the organisation’s tools and practices were team specific but were available to everyone within that team. Respondents demonstrated that ambidexterity occurred either sequentially (exploration followed by exploitation) or contextually (the individual chose how they utilised their time). However, its purpose and the manner in which it was used changed because individuals used it in different ways:

“What we’re using is ‘User Story’. Everything has a user story so these are the kinds of tools many work with. And every single user story has: who the person is that wants something done, what the most important thing is, why, what’s the business value and what’s the acceptance criteria. What the definition of ‘done’ is” (Team Lead).

The overall purpose of the “user story” tool was to focus practitioner’s attention on key objectives. Within the team, every individual developed a narrative for every item worked on. It served multiple purposes: as a communication or collaboration tool, a project plan and a means by which individuals shared ideas and progress. This tool demonstrated how individual practitioners’ goals contributed to the overall team objectives. Although the “user story” tool was utilised for both exploratory and exploitative initiatives, the way in which it was used differed depending on the ambidextrous actions of the individual.

Respondents indicated no distinction between the tools and practices used for exploration or exploitation. The findings demonstrated that the way in which practices were used was dependent on the practitioner. They also demonstrated that the same tools could be used to achieve different results. For example a feedback session

could be used for informal collaboration on an improvement initiative while another practitioner might use the same session to highlight achievements on an innovation or both. In this way practitioners displayed flexible use of practices. The practice of allowing respondents to work according to their strengths enabled them to take ownership of their work and demonstrate a “can-do” spirit:

“No-one puts up barriers to new ideas...If I think something is valid to put forward as a change and hopefully it makes things more productive in our business, I will research it, detail it and if possible in my area, trial the change and then we have the ability to show what this change is” (Head of Department).

By taking initiative practitioners exercised their agentic power that in turn benefited the organisation and gave the practitioners a sense of purpose. Practitioners’ actions and knowledge gave meaning to the practices that they participated in or resisted. In this way practitioners balanced the often-conflicting objectives of the organisation: limited resources versus cost benefit, exploration versus exploitation and time versus output (Smets et al., 2012). The findings indicated that ambidexterity enablers or constraints did not increase or decrease in relation to preference for either an innovation or improvement. Respondents indicated that regardless of the production of new products or changes to existing products the primary focus was the individual’s ability to demonstrate value. The effort exerted was not dependent on whether the action engaged in was exploratory or exploitative in nature, but rather whether the individual experienced a sense of purpose.

Practitioners’ practices not only impacted their choice between exploration and exploitation, it also impacted a higher-level organisational objective. This demonstrated that practitioners’ actions contributed to short-term and long-term organisational objectives (Marchides and Chu, 2009). Respondents demonstrated this simultaneous pursuit by considering:

“How we could make this more beneficial to [Company] in the long term. So what we’ve been pushing for and certainly because we move...at such a high pace and we need to be able to match that. One of the big things that I’ve driven through is that we need to be able to try new things” (Manager).

The respondents demonstrated how their individual actions, regardless of exploratory or exploitative effort, contributed to the organisational goals. Practitioners who felt empowered were more motivated to pursue the greater organisation objectives and go beyond the call of duty. Practitioners’ motivation

levels can be tied to their psychological makeup and the context they work in (Barrick et al., 2013). This is consonant with findings that individuals, through their relationships, bring motivations into their network (Tasselli et al., 2015). The findings indicate that because both exploratory and exploitative actions resulted in the attainment of organisational goals that individuals elected their preferred ambidextrous actions because they were more motivated by it.

Habitude can be seen as a behavioural attribute of strategic consequence that impacts the enactment of organisational ambidexterity. For example, habitude impacts the practitioner's ability, willingness and desire to make a meaningful contribution. The findings demonstrate that individuals are ambidextrous because they are able, willing and motivated to be so.

"It depends on the section and individual...I feel that I can, and no-one has said that I cannot. Some people, I've spoken to, they feel differently. They feel they don't have that freedom so they don't exercise it. I don't think they were explicitly told they can't so I think it's an individual perception of how we work" (Specialist Software Engineer).

An interesting finding was that the way in which practices were used was shaped by practitioners' personal drive as well as the context in which they worked. The findings suggest that in general empowerment could be seen as both explicit and implicit. Either management gave its subordinates the scope for independent work or the individuals were self-directed in their use of available practices. The findings demonstrated that ambidextrous actions were either delegated by management in that practitioners were directed to exploit or explore or it was self-directed where individuals determined the action they engaged in.

This concurred with a view of human agency as a reflection of empowerment (Etelapelto et al., 2013). Agency manifests itself in practitioners' freedom and ability to control their work. The practitioners' expertise and their behavioural practices were considered to be a core function inherent in the individuals. Whittington (2006) considered practitioners' behaviour to include their expertise, know-how and their background knowledge because agency is linked to the practitioners' self-fulfilment (Etelapelto et al., 2013). By supporting practitioners, the organisation accrues performance benefits (Gavetti, 2005). In this way the findings demonstrate that ambidexterity is encapsulated in the habitude of practitioners.

5.4.2 Interlinkages between Praxis and Practices

“Execution” conceptualises the context in which organisational ambidexterity flourishes. It reflects the interconnection between the organisational context in which work is done and the practices used within that context. Respondents highlighted the interdependency between organisational context and social practices such as behaviour, motivation and cognition (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). To these practitioners, organisational practices reflected the tools, norms and procedures used to do work (Vaara and Whittington, 2012):

“So I don’t like [organisational] functions, it stops people thinking. I have a very flat structure and it’s like: What do we need to get the job done and who wants to do each piece?” (Director).

“You need an environment to collaborate” (Specialist Software Engineer).

These examples indicate organisational structures that enabled or constrained practices. The findings demonstrated that the enablement of organisational ambidexterity was influenced by organisational structures. Organisational silos where organisations are divided into exploratory and exploitative functional areas stifled the successful enablement of ambidexterity. Instead a more flexible organisational structure where the individual exercised judgement and took into consideration factors including structure, environment and organisational objectives and outcomes, were more successful. Respondents felt that static structures led to prescriptive practices whereas breaking down structural barriers enabled creative use of practices. Respondents believed that a favourable organisational context was necessary to pursue organisational ambidexterity, which some equate to “getting the job done”.

Management indicated that a flat hierarchical structure supported the balance of current and future opportunities because silos stopped practitioners from “thinking outside the box”. Respondents recalled a specific methodology used within ITC organisation to achieve results:

“[We have] this methodology called ‘Scrum’. And it really is to do with rugby: Let’s get a team of people together, huddle down and closely communicate to get the right results” (Director).

To enact ambidexterity strategising tools such as “Scrum” and “Stand-Up” fostered teamwork, collaboration and the cross-functional sharing of information.

Practitioners used the “Stand-Up” tool to outline what they were working on, to highlight the barriers faced in completing work and to request help if required to complete work or meet targets. Its purpose was to foster a results-oriented work context regardless of whether initiatives were exploitative or exploratory in nature.

Innovative work required different practices and environments to that required for practitioners “day job” or “core functions”. A specialist software engineer explained:

*“It’s a creative process and as such you can’t direct it and it’s unpredictable. Innovation is like bacterial growth, you have to create the right environment for bacteria to grow like the petri dish and let it grow”
(Specialist Software Engineer).*

Thus the organisational context serves to enable and constrain actions and practices. This is consistent with findings that social beings are defined by their practices that cannot be separated from context (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). The findings indicated that the actions, tools and practices available within the organisational environment tested and pushed the boundaries of the organisation. This vacillating interaction between the organisation and its practices reflected the broader organisational context and plays testimony to its flexibility or rigidity. This is consonant with findings that organisational context is a product of the organisation’s culture, process and structure (Liu and Maitlis, 2014).

Execution embodies the organisational context enabling organisational ambidexterity. It considers the output, benefits and results of the interaction between the organisation and its practices to demonstrate how practices shape and are shaped by organisational context. The findings suggest that organisational agility allows the organisation to capitalise on opportunities it would otherwise need to forgo if it stuck rigidly to existing processes and structures. Rigidity would lead to circumventing the established processes if it hampered quick and effective decision-making. If rigidity has a negative impact on the organisation’s successful outcomes (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) then flexibility has a positive impact. This is consonant with findings by Eisenhardt et al. (2010) that balancing microfoundational elements is essential for organisational success. However they state that greater significance should be devoted to understanding the impact of the environment on that balance. The findings demonstrated how strategic decisions, “to get the right results” and team objectives, “to get the job done” were communicated through the organisation and the team. The findings demonstrate that within these case organisations

ambidexterity decisions were more complex than a choice between exploration and exploitation or even the form of ambidexterity (structural or contextual ambidexterity). Instead “execution” demonstrates a more nuanced view of the organisational context enabling organisation ambidexterity.

5.4.3 Interlinkages between Praxis and Practitioners

“Exchange” is conceptualised by the alignment of organisational objectives with practitioners’ beliefs resulting in mutual benefit to both practitioners and the organisation. Exchange is directional because it reflects how aligned belief systems influences the direction that organisational ambidexterity takes.

Practitioners’ satisfaction with their work environment provided incentive to work harder. In this way practitioners demonstrated the importance of a favourable organisational context to ensure productive practitioners.

“I’m given a great degree of trust, autonomy and flexibility, so if I want to work from home that’s not a problem. We’re results based...we have the flexibility to judge ourselves, not adhere to arbitrary criteria like hours in the office. It’s how productive you are” (Software Engineer).

The findings demonstrate that respondents valued the organisation’s confidence in their ability to be ambidextrous and act ambidextrously, displayed through management’s trust. And as a consequence respondents rewarded that faith by delivering the outcomes of an ambidextrous approach such as value delivery. In other words the focus was more on how ambidexterity was enacted rather than an emphasis on what ambidexterity was. In this way individuals aligned to the company objective of delivering value. The intangible elements like trust, autonomy and flexibility aligned the practitioner and organisational goals in the pursuit of organisational ambidexterity.

Respondents intimated that their work was self-directed and that they worked according to deliverables. The team structure provided sufficient control mechanisms to justify their autonomy, provided respondents achieved set deliverables. The findings also indicated that the organisation’s culture shaped the practitioners’ ability to simultaneously explore and exploit.

“We have a culture of trust here...No one is going to trust you if you constantly deliver late or don't deliver at all or deliver the wrong things. It's a matter of culture that enables initial trust, but deliverables ensure that the trust continues” (Software Engineer).

Practitioners, by their actions and inactions, allowed the organisational context to enable or constrain them. For instance not elevating potential problems for resolution allowed the environment or governance structures to constrain actions. Governance structures influenced the enablement of both exploratory and exploitative actions. Governance by its definition is a mechanism intended to facilitate the achievement of the organisation's outcomes (Durand, 2012). Therefore governance is intended to enable practitioners to achieve outcomes (both exploratory and exploitative), although respondents indicated that it constrained their ability to do work. This is consistent with findings that agency is associated with practitioner's autonomy, self-fulfilment and resistance to structural constraints (Etelapelto et al., 2013).

Exchange has directional properties that are embedded in the exchange between practitioners, their workflow and lived experiences. Practitioners indicated that various factors such as organisational context and a common purpose determined whether they embraced organisational objectives:

“If we were to take me and put me in a another team where they have a lot more pressure and more of a magnifying lens over them to ensure they drive more money, than a right amount of business, then perhaps I would also become less entrepreneurial or less prone to risks” (Head of Department).

This respondent intimated that he would be less inclined to pursue goals if he did not believe in them. This sentiment was reflected in similar responses from other respondents. Because respondents were outcomes focused, they engaged in activities that they felt reflected their interests or strengths. For some this reflected improvement and for others it represented innovation. They intimated that they pursued goals because it was “the right thing to do”. Their response is indicative of possible resistance to change if circumstances contradicted their beliefs. A possible reason for this is that respondents indicated that their work was a personal extension of themselves and that they were more likely to own the organisation's vision if they agreed with it. This is consonant with findings that agency manifests itself in how practitioners relate to their world (Etelapelto et al., 2013). In this way committed practitioners drive the organisation's objectives.

Exchange also considers the correlation between practitioner drive, desire and encouragement and organisational context. These intangible factors provided causal explanations of practitioner's beliefs:

"That comes back to pride [in] the company that's at the forefront of innovation...I must say I enjoy working with and for [Company]. That you don't find in other large corporate companies! They really do focus on their people and as an employee that's awesome. It's one of the reasons why people want to work for [Company]...It's great to see the company challenging and head for the No.1 spot in everything they do" (Specialist Engineer).

The findings suggest that the way in which practitioners view the organisation they work for directly impacted not only how they viewed themselves but it also influenced their motivation levels as well as their levels of trust and commitment to the organisation (Huy, 2011). This is demonstrated by the respondents' views of the organisation. The respondents' perceptions of the organisation directly impacted the organisation's attainment of strategic goals. Similarly the respondents' view of the organisation's pursuit of organisational ambidexterity impacted the achievement of that objective.

By recognising the value of interlinking organisational context and practitioners, the organisation balances outcomes (happy and engaged employees) and strategic objectives, i.e. "No.1 spot in everything" to create a culture that practitioners could identify with and support. In this way the organisational identity resonated with practitioners and they perceived the organisation to be: "The best", "No.1", "First to market" or a "Good corporate citizen". These strategic objectives tie in with the practitioners' personal belief systems. The findings demonstrated that exchange moderated the alignment of the organisation and practitioners' belief systems to drive the direction of the organisation. This is because the process of formulating the organisational ambidexterity strategy is tied to the practitioners' identity by linking the individual and organisational contexts (Laine et al., 2016). A summary of the findings is included in Table 5.1. (p. 172).

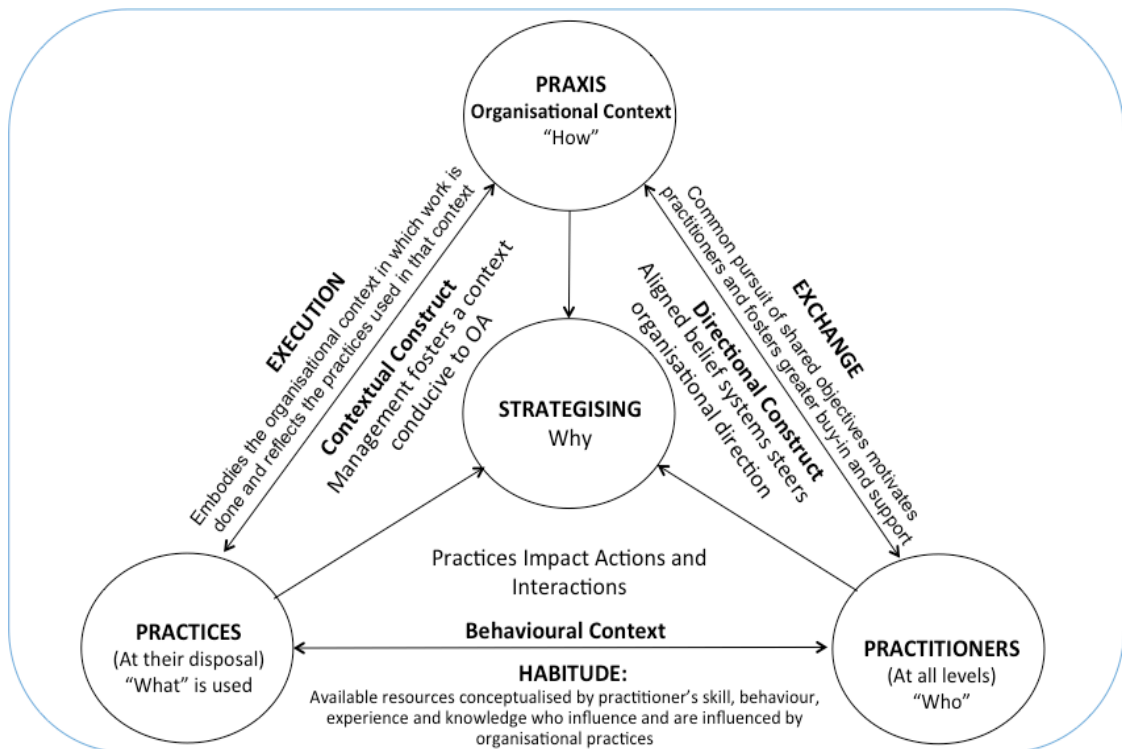
Table 5.1 Processes Enabling Organisational Ambidexterity

HABITUDE		EXECUTION		EXCHANGE
Interlinkage	Practitioners and Practices	Practices and Praxis	Praxis and Practitioners	
Term Explanation	Conceptualised by the behaviour, actions and interactions of practitioners who influence and are influenced by organisational practices	Embodies the organisational context and practices permitted in that organisational context to enable organisational ambidexterity	Common pursuit of shared objectives and mutual dependence fosters greater buy-in and support resulting in mutual benefit in pursuit of ambidexterity	
Decisions	Individual Level	Organisational / Strategic Level	Organisational / Individual Level	
Influence	Multi-directional influence	Top-down influence	Bottom-up influence	
Context enabling OA	Behavioural Context: Impacts the practitioner's ability, willingness and desire to make a meaningful contribution that results in meeting objectives e.g. Ambidexterity	Contextual Factors: Management creates an organisational context, internal systems and supporting practices that are favourable for enabling ambidexterity	Directional Context: Aligning practitioner and organisational objectives, because of a common belief system, steers the direction of the organisation's pursuits	
Occurrences	Practitioner's past experience and practices influence their current experience on a daily basis	As the need arises through lobbying of support, through empowerment and removing barriers	Aligning goals needs to be taken into consideration during the recruitment of practitioners or as a management intervention	
Reflects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resources at firms disposal What practitioners use to strategise Ability and capability Actions and interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management influences unique praxis Creates a climate enabling ambidexterity Management avails practices for an intended purpose or outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practitioner's view of the organisation impacts their commitment to the organisation Individual identity tied to organisation's identity Shared desire to achieve strategic objectives 	
Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision-making ability Practitioner's discursive attributes Use of tools, rules and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working conditions Culture Collaborative environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committed, engaged and involved practitioners Shared belief systems Mutual benefit and mutual dependence 	
Additional Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains how practitioners translate strategic plans into action Strategising becomes ingrained (the choice between exploration and exploitation is instinctive, not a conscious decision) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates the organisational conditions that favours successful implementations Internal systems and supporting practices creates conditions favourable to ambidexterity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When practitioners buy into the organisation's vision, they are more likely to own it Committed practitioners drive organisational objectives Better team dynamics, productive workforce Commitment to customer service 	

5.5 Discussion

The central questions that informed this research are: What interlinkages influence organisational ambidexterity? And, how do these interlinkages shape organisational ambidexterity? Literature has indicated that praxis, practices and practitioners are “discreet but interrelated” phenomena (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007, p. 8). While the findings show that these are critical elements in enabling organisational ambidexterity, evidence indicates that the intertwined interactions reflect enablement in dynamic conditions (Figure 5.5). This has practical relevance because it is the complexities of organisational ambidexterity that helps root it in reality (O’Reilly and Tushman, 2013). An analysis of the interlinkages between these elements provides evidence of patterns that are successful in shaping organisational ambidexterity. These patterns are elaborated on to formulate the theoretical and conceptual framing of the findings. These interlinkages are significant in understanding organisational ambidexterity. It provides answers in terms of the interconnectedness of constructs. And it offers explanations of individual level attributes that have influence over macro level outcomes. Three patterns of interconnectedness emerged: habitude, execution and exchange, which are discussed below.

Figure 5.5. Patterns of Interconnectedness



Habitude entails two key components: practitioners and practices. The results of this research indicate that organisations with a wider pool of enabling resources are better equipped to enact organisational ambidexterity. Management research has predominantly focused on ambidexterity as an organisational level construct with little understanding of what individuals do to enact ambidexterity (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). This necessitated further research on the behaviours that support organisational ambidexterity (Rogan and Mors, 2014). Motivation can also be used as a mechanism to explain behaviour because it demonstrates practitioners' actions and their desires to resolve paradoxical challenges. The evidence indicates that habitude is conceptualised by the behaviour, actions and interactions of practitioners who influence and are influenced by organisational practices. Practices reflect the social realities of practitioners that are inherent in their identity, belief and power (Young, 2009). Consistent with the premise of this research, the results show that practices cannot be divorced from practitioners themselves. Practices highlight the agentic power of practitioners to bring about an action or phenomena (Etelapelto et al., 2013).

The interconnection between practitioners and their practises gives meaning to the available resources at the organisation's disposal. The evidence supports the idea that practitioners at all levels of the organisation displayed strategising behaviours (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). The combination of practitioners' discursive, social and behavioural practices helped them to use organisational resources, tools and socio-material practices to respond to organisational challenges such as competition and other external pressures. Thus habitude uncovers a collection of practitioner skills that are inspiring, solves problems, drives results, powerfully and believably communicates, builds relationships, translates strategy, displays technical expertise and fosters organisational ambidexterity. Habitude is increasingly relevant as organisations include a wider spectrum of practitioners when making strategic decisions from middle management, professional specialists to engineers.

Execution embodies the organisational context and available practices. In support of the notion that a favourable organisational context is foundational for enabling ambidexterity, it was found that management played a significant role. For instance, execution is linked to management action because managers generally

have to manage the trade-off between actions at different organisational levels (Jansen et al., 2016). Given its significance scholars called for further insight into the nature of managerial capability to achieve ambidexterity (Birkinshaw et al., 2016; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). Previous research has looked at the indirect role of management in enabling organisational ambidexterity but has not considered their direct role (Jansen et al., 2016). By providing evidence of management actions that influences practices, this research contributes to the direct role management actions plays in creating the organisational context that supports organisational ambidexterity.

Management is instrumental in making sense of strategic goals (Jansen et al., 2008) and translating it into manageable actions at lower levels. Management also makes sense of working conditions by removing barriers hindering practitioners (Turner et al., 2015) and by making practices available to support practitioners. For example management approved the establishment of practices used such as “stand-up” and “scrum”.

Organisational context by its materiality (be it real or perceived) influences the way in which practices are used. The findings indicate that perceptions of the difficulty faced, the support received or ease of navigating governance processes impacted perceptions of ability to do work. Thus suitable structures (both formal and informal), culture and organisational processes are required to support the practices available. Both organisational context and practices shape their use because they influence the way in which it is used (Seidl and Whittington, 2014). The evidence indicates that the organisational tools and practices do not operate in a vacuum. And as a result practices cannot be isolated from the context it occurs in (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Antonacopoulou and Balogun, 2010).

Exchange reflects the impact of practitioners and the organisational context. The results support the finding that where practitioners align their beliefs with the organisations, they were more motivated to pursue organisational goals. Few studies have considered environmental dynamics in the enablement of organisational ambidexterity (Halevi et al., 2015). Current literature is incomplete in offering solutions for enabling organisational ambidexterity effectively in dynamic or complex situations (Jansen et al., 2016). Jansen and colleagues propose that studies on beliefs could reduce the paradox between exploration and exploitation. The findings indicate that practitioners' view of the organisation in terms of their

environment and the organisational identity has implications of strategic significance because it is likely to impact the strategic direction of the organisation such as “being first to market”. If practitioners are committed, they are more engaged, willing to participate, productive and are active contributors to enabling organisational ambidexterity (Wang and Rafiq, 2014). Evidence indicates that the benefits of engaged employees include improved decision-making, better team dynamics, commitment to customer service and a happy and productive workforce (Mom et al., 2015). Thus the alignment of pursuits results in mutual benefits to both organisations and practitioners. Exchange can be seen to be a directional construct because aligned goals results in practitioners fulfilling organisational objectives. Misaligned goals could see the organisation focused on exploration such as selling new technology to customers while customer-facing practitioners are involved in patching existing technology.

The organisation relies on practitioners to use their skill, expertise and commitment to deliver project results. Because dynamic environments are best supported by flexible and agile organisations with quick responsiveness (Halevi et al., 2015), its effectiveness depends on practitioners who thrive under these conditions. Practitioner actions are significant because agentic processes are altered through the changing actions of practitioners (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). In this way practitioners exercise their agency through enactment of routines that fulfil “managerial interests” (Safavi and Omidvar, 2016, p. 550). The findings speak to the effect of a supportive environment and a culture valuing practitioner contributions. It is this type of supportive environment that enables organisational ambidexterity to flourish (Carmeli and Halevi, 2009). Halevi et al. (2015) found that environmental dynamism was a boundary condition for effective top management teams to enable ambidexterity. This research indicates that their findings can be extrapolated to practitioners at multiple levels of the organisation.

5.5.1 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

This research followed a strategy as practice view to construct a framework to understand the emergence of ambidexterity at multiple hierarchical levels. Furthering knowledge on these behavioural, contextual and directional enablers contributes to organisational ambidexterity literature. Jansen and colleagues (2016) have made strides in investigating the emergence of ambidexterity at lower levels of

the organisation by looking at socio-psychological perspectives. While their study specifically focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of teams, similar focus on individual practitioners was lacking. By providing evidence of the relationships between practitioners, their available practices and the organisational context, this research directs attention to the significance of practitioners at all levels of the organisation whose actions have strategic level outcomes.

Secondly, this research contributes to the ongoing debate surrounding the micro-macro linkages. This research has demonstrated how practitioners' micro actions contribute to macro outcomes. This is significant because this research places practitioners first and foremost at the centre of enabling organisational ambidexterity and as such they are instrumental to the organisation's attainment of its objectives. Despite scholarly interest in the micro-macro linkages, there have been calls for further critical examination of these links (Felin, et al., 2015). Integrating the top-down and bottom-up enactment of organisational ambidexterity advances the idea of a multidirectional involvement to enable ambidexterity (Mom et al., 2007). The contention of this paper, supported by findings, indicates that aligned organisational focus ensures that both management and practitioners steer the pursuit of organisational ambidexterity in the same direction.

Thirdly, this paper contributes to a research focus at the intersection between organisational ambidexterity and strategy as practice literature and more specifically how organisational ambidexterity strategy is implemented in practice. Particular focus was on the contribution of Whittington's (2006) praxis, practices and practitioners framework to the enablement of organisational ambidexterity. To operationalise these interconnections the results of this research provides evidence that habitude, execution and exchange enable organisations to enact organisational ambidexterity. More specifically, that a combination of enabling interconnections equips organisations to meet the complex paradoxical demands of exploration and exploitation.

And finally this research also offers practical implications. It demonstrates how and why individual actors, their actions and practices shape the way the organisation strategises about organisational ambidexterity. It also highlights that practitioners are key to linking the organisational practices to the organisational context. Thus knowledge of the contributory influence of practitioners is of significance if management is to capitalise on the resources already at their

disposal. Thus an important management consideration is the need for practitioners to act autonomously so that they are free to enact ambidexterity. This research also has implications for the recruitment of employees. The findings have demonstrated the benefits when practitioners' beliefs are aligned to the organisations. Therefore it is important to ensure that prospective employees share the organisations' beliefs. A further consideration is that instead of focusing on ambidexterity, management should consider focusing on practitioners because it is their actions and interactions using the organisations practices that deliver organisational ambidexterity.

5.5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this research also provide opportunities for future investigations. First, this research is based on the UK ITC sector. Evidence has shown that the six case companies have similar approaches to exploration and exploitation thereby limiting the benefits of multiple case studies. Future studies could replicate and extend this research to other settings to investigate the emergence of ambidexterity at multiple hierarchical levels in different industries.

Second, an interpretative methodology such as case study research has limitations in terms of the generalisability of results (Eisenhardt, 1989). This exploratory design is useful for investigating the little known connection between the organisational context, its practices and the practitioners enabling ambidexterity. Different methods may be used to deduce generalisations and isolate causal effects or to synthesise the similarities and differences across diverse industries.

Finally, this research has established a relationship between the organisations' context, the practices it makes available and the practitioners using it. In so doing this research has attempted to understand occurrences at the nexus of these interconnections and it has attempted to understand why practitioners act and behave as they do. The findings provide evidence of practitioners' belief systems and motivations justifying why they strategise about organisational ambidexterity. However, it has not been possible to delve deeper or further untangle the emotional or intellectual mechanisms that influence behaviour or actions. This is of value to organisational ambidexterity literature because it impacts decision-making and can reinforce desired behaviour. Thus a practice view of organisational ambidexterity

may benefit from collaborative research with other disciplines such as behavioural economics or business psychology.

5.6 Conclusion

This research has addressed the emergence of ambidexterity at multiple hierarchical levels. An empirical investigation of six ITC case companies has validated the theoretical proposition that micro level actions and interactions have macro level outcomes. The findings suggest that behavioural, contextual and directional enablers are significant in the enactment of organisational ambidexterity. The findings also indicate that organisational ambidexterity is not a strategic level construct, nor an organisational level construct unable to connect to the individual or their actions. Instead the findings suggest that organisational ambidexterity is enacted at multiple levels of the organisation by means of habitude, execution and exchange. Finally, indications are that individuals strategise about organisational ambidexterity because they are motivated to do so by an alignment of their values with the organisation's values. Rather than focusing on organisational ambidexterity as an outcome that delivers organisational performance (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), emphasis should be on its micro elements and the interlinkages that connect them. In other words, emphasis should be on the drivers of ambidexterity (not ambidexterity itself) and the outcome of that focus will produce organisational ambidexterity. Therefore, to enable organisational ambidexterity necessitates enabling practitioners.

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Appendix 5A. Statement of Authorship

This declaration concerns the article entitled:							
Connecting the Dots Between Practitioners, Practices and Praxis to Enable Organisational Ambidexterity							
Publication status (tick one)							
Draft Manuscript	Submitted		In Review		Accepted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published
Publication details (reference)	European Academy of Management (2017), Glasgow.						
Candidate's contribution to the paper (detailed, and also given as a percentage).	<p>The candidate contributed to/ considerably contributed to/ predominantly executed the</p> <p>Formulation of ideas: 100%</p> <p>Design of methodology: 100%</p> <p>Experimental work: 100%</p> <p>Presentation of data in journal format: 100%</p>						
Statement from Candidate	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research Candidature.						
Signed	Natasha Rose				Date	10 April 2017	

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects the consolidating discussion on the investigation of organisational ambidexterity by bridging the divide between theory and practice. It aims to synthesize the theoretical contributions emerging from this research and reflects on the significance of those contributions. Three research papers have investigated this phenomenon: The first paper sought to segment the microfoundations underpinning organisational ambidexterity, as this is an under-researched area. The second paper sought to identify the various forms of organising as well as the organisational and individual behaviours required to simultaneously maintain existing business ventures while pursuing exploratory innovation. The third paper considered the interlinkages between the microfoundations because micro level actions and interactions that enable organisational ambidexterity have strategic consequences for the organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

Four theoretical contributions are presented. The outline of this chapter is as follows: Contributions 1-3 revisits the theoretical contributions of each research paper. For a more detailed discussion of each contribution, refer to the respective research paper's discussion section. In addition, Contribution 4 looks at the relationship between exploration and exploitation. The contributions create a platform to discuss the practical implications outlined in the conclusion chapter.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

The findings advance four important extensions to current thinking on organisational ambidexterity. Contributions 4 draw on the overarching considerations of organisational ambidexterity in practice. In each of these contributions it can be observed that organisational ambidexterity reflects a model of reciprocal causation. That is behaviour, agency, cognition, action and interaction that shape and are shaped by context and organisational practices (Bandura, 1989).

6.2.1 Contribution 1: The Microfoundations of Organisational Ambidexterity

A significant contribution of this research is how a largely theoretical construct, organisational ambidexterity (Turner et al., 2013) is enabled in practice. By looking at the theory, practice conundrum this research introduces a better understanding of how organisational ambidexterity is shaped. It considers the consequences of that shaping for the practitioners enacting ambidexterity and the organisation desiring its performance benefits. This is based on the premise that we know very little about the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity. And by segmenting ambidexterity into its constituent parts we have formed knowledge patterns explaining how organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice.

Our research reveals that the symbiosis that exists between practitioners, praxis and practices where practitioners, their actions and interactions cannot be separated from the organisational system or the practices that they engage in. In this way practitioners, through their activities, enact organisational ambidexterity within the confines of the organisational system. Here, it is proposed that by segmenting the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity into their constituent parts the symbiosis begins to frame our understanding of what happens in practice. This is significant in that it changes organisational ambidexterity research focus from a consideration of something the organisation does (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) to something that individuals operating within the organisational system do using the tools at their disposal. While increasingly organisational ambidexterity scholars are considering behavioural attributes like dynamic capabilities (Birkinshaw et al., 2016; Teece et al., 2016) and physiological aspects such as cognition and motivation (Mom et al., 2015), research remains focused on the management level (Jansen et al., 2016; Mom et al., 2015; Good and Michel, 2013).

This research considers practitioners to be at all levels of the hierarchy. These practitioners are specialists, experts, managers, heads of department and directors who enact organisational ambidexterity. Thus this research addresses the concern that we do not have clarity about how practitioners act ambidextrously (Mom et al., 2015). Practitioners shape and are shaped by the activities used as well as the conditions in which they are used. Practitioners are therefore influenced by organisational parameters because the organisational rules and tools shape

practitioners' activities (Sztompka, 1991). Thus the successful enablement of organisational ambidexterity requires consistency between the organisation's culture, environment, people, strategy and vision (Birkinshaw et al., 2016).

6.2.2 Contribution 2: Modes of Enablement

The first paper contributed to understanding what the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity are. The second paper takes a practice perspective illustrating the different forms of organising at the organisation's disposal to simultaneously manage efficiency and innovation. In addition it looks at the organisational and individual behaviours to manage those paradoxes.

We provide evidence that different structures are required to achieve different organisational outcomes. Scholars contend that creating a balance between exploration and exploitation requires different modes of adaption that have different dynamics (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). This is because organisations are complex and face paradoxical challenges requiring innovative solutions. Thus organisations require different modes of adaption as one-size fits all prescriptions of enablement cannot be applied to organisational ambidexterity.

Organisations require formal and informal modes of organising where formal structures reflects the organisational conditions in which individuals do work such as governance, rules and procedures while informal structures are shaped by behaviour and actions (Zimmermann et al., 2015). The findings illustrate that the type of enablement is context dependent such that exploration or exploitation may require either formal or informal structures. This points to the need for versatility and agility. We offer evidence of a mixed ambidextrous approach – the combination of approaches both formal and informal to demonstrate how integrative models help the organisation adapt to change.

The findings indicate that an organisation should not pursue its innovation efforts in isolation by focusing on the way it is organised and implemented. Instead, the successful enablement of innovation is tied to organisational ambidexterity and should be vested in the people enabling it rather than contextualising it. People are the glue that connects organisational objectives with action to produce outcomes. Scholars have speculated about the various types of behaviours required to

underpin organisational ambidexterity (Rogan and Mors, 2014). This research provides evidence of the organisational and individual behaviours that support organisational ambidexterity in different contexts. Practitioners exposed to greater autonomy as a result of the organisational context exhibit greater agency because they are incentivised by leadership, structure and trust in their capability and expertise.

We found a social dimension, including individual and organisational behaviours, to be a key contributor to implementing ambidexterity successfully. These are directly related to practitioners' motivation levels (Garud et al., 2011). Organisational level behaviours create an environment where organisational ambidexterity flourishes while individual behaviours result from the individual's skill, motivation and personal belief systems. In this way the environment in which organisational ambidexterity is enabled, shapes its implementation (Ansari and Krop, 2012).

6.2.3 Contribution 3: The Interlinkages between Praxis, Practices and Practitioners

While the first paper segments organisational ambidexterity into its microfoundations, the third paper connects these microfoundations to interrogate their interconnections. This is because research has called for the bottom-up effects of microelements (Jansen et al., 2016), to provide evidence of the multilevel impact of these microelements (Felin et al., 2015). This research considers the macro level outcomes of micro level actions by looking at the practitioner drivers, motivators and enablers of organisational ambidexterity. The third paper looked at the interlinkages between practitioners, the organisational context and available practices that produce behavioural, contextual and directional benefits. If the enablement of organisational ambidexterity is vested in the people who exercise it by using the practices at their disposal within the confines of the organisation, then we need to understand how this occurs as well as its enabling or constraining impact on organisational ambidexterity. How individuals relate to their environment creates their reality (Etelapelto et al., 2013) and this reality not only has agentic power but has the "causal potential" to change reality (p. 50).

Despite its significance, limited research is available on interlinkages between praxis, practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015). Although these notable scholars: Jarzabkowski, Kaplan, Siedl and Whittington articulate the: who, what and how of practice they do not provide an explanation of “why” these interlinkages occur. Furthermore Jarzabkowski (2007) and Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) have identified strategising as occurring at the nexus of praxis, practices and practitioners, while Felin et al. (2015) contend that: “overall, the notion of microfoundations, as it applies to micro scholarship, sits at the nexus of actors, their interactions, and the mechanisms that shape and form such interactions within organisations or other relevant contexts (e.g. markets)” (p. 600).

The first insights emerging from this paper relate to habitude, which explains how practitioners influence, and are influenced by organisational practices. It is the combination of individuals’ actions, each delivering to their own specific targets that together accomplishes the organisation’s objectives. It requires management to make sense of the overall targets (Jansen et al., 2016) and remove barriers (Turner et al., 2015) so that individuals can do what they are good at. However practices are person specific in that different people interpret and use the same practices in different ways (Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2012). Management is instrumental in the adoption of practitioners’ practices (Jarzabkowski et al., 2012). Research has indicated how practices and activities enable and constrain the agentic powers of practitioners (Laine et al., 2015; Mantere and Vaaro, 2008; Whittington, 2006). Thus habitude is essential in formulating the strategising practices of practitioners as they enable organisational ambidexterity. Habitude is directional because of its causal impact, both top-down and bottom-up (Mom et al., 2015). The enactment of organisational ambidexterity has multilevel application which is indicative of the “directionality of causal arrows, whether top-down or bottom-up” (Felin et al., 2015, p. 587).

While this research agrees with the assertion that the enablement of organisational ambidexterity is a bottom-up process (Mom et al., 2015; Zimmermann et al., 2015), previous research considered it to be a top-down process (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Carmeli and Halevi, 2009; Jansen et al., 2008). However, the findings support a different justification of the bottom-up approach to the one advocated by Zimmermann et al. (2015). They contend that front-line managers see opportunities that the top management team are still unaware of. While this has merit, the emerging data suggests that practitioners are driven by a

desire to add value. Practitioners assume and take ownership of the organisational goals and pursue it in their personal capacity. Practitioners in a management, supervisory or team leader position act as buffers against barriers (Turner et al., 2015) and facilitator of stakeholder lobbying while the organisational praxis is constructed to empower practitioners to exercise their expertise. Thus strategising about organisational ambidexterity is personal, where practitioners enable organisational ambidexterity supported by the organisation's management, practices and praxis. Practitioners in leadership positions have greater flexibility in deciding how the team is managed, structured and organised because the focus is on delivery rather than functional silos. While the initial strategic direction to pursue organisational ambidexterity is taken by the top management team, practitioners at different levels of the organisation have an opportunity to contribute to this.

The second insight relates to execution, which explains how the organisational context and available tools, rules and resources are used for a specific purpose. It highlights the approaches available to adapt to the organisation's changing environment (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Thus the tools and practices reflect what is available to enable organisational ambidexterity and the organisational context reflects the conditions under which those availabilities exist. Because of this, execution is said to have contextual meaning. It defines the parameters in which decisions are made and from this the available bouquet of choices stems to enact organisational ambidexterity. The strategy to pursue organisational ambidexterity is drawn from the tools, methods and frameworks used (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2015). This repertoire from which strategising decisions are made is essential to balance the demands of complex organisations. Literature has indicated the difficulty organisations face when adapting to changes in their internal and external environment (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Because practices cannot be separated from the context in which they occur (Paroutis et al., 2016), their repetition creates the organisational culture, which has the influence to enable and constrain the execution of organisational ambidexterity (Etelapelto et al., 2013).

The third insight relates to exchange, which explains how the actions and interactions between the practitioner and organisational praxis are mutually dependent to produce desired outcomes. Practitioners derive agency from their work because agency is connected to the practitioners' autonomy and self-fulfilment (Etelapelto et al., 2013). What practitioners want is an opportunity to add value and make a difference because agentic action is dependent on their ability and capability

to act (Etelapelto et al., 2013). Jansen et al. (2016) found that the leadership team was instrumental in creating a supportive environment that enabled organisational ambidexterity. The organisational climate considers the organisation's HR practices, its leadership as well as its policies and procedures. This explains why organisational climate differs across organisations (Felin et al., 2015). Practitioners derive personal meaning from their work (Niessen et al., 2016) and consequently link their personal success to the organisation's success. Exchange has power because of the interconnection with the organisational culture and structure, which affects practitioner's attitude and behaviour where information moves between these to produce intended outcomes (Kahler, 2015).

Firm-level competitive advantage is derived when practitioners create value for the organisation (Felin et al., 2015) emphasising how micro level actions have macro level outcomes. Although Mom et al. (2015) found that a high sense of self-efficacy in managers increased their willingness to engage in complex behaviours, the findings demonstrated in this research indicated that this was evident for all practitioners where efficacy-based agency reflected their belief in their own actions. This is because practitioners' self-efficacy entails their beliefs, capabilities and ability to act, which explains individual agency (Etelapelto et al., 2013). Thus the mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and the practitioner produces more committed employees who are more engaged and committed to achieving organisational objectives (Wang and Rafiq, 2014). This relationship is directional because the mutual relationship determines the direction the organisation will take such as joint commitment to being "No.1 in the market".

6.2.4 Contribution 4: Relationship Between Exploration and Exploitation

Research on organisational ambidexterity assumes conflicting expressions of activities (Papachroni et al., 2015) with emphasis on its paradox, tensions and dualities (March, 1991). And consequently complex situations require complex solutions. Although little is known about how organisations balance their complex requirements, Turner et al. (2016) propose that exploratory efforts need to be blended with exploitative ones. Increasingly scholars are acknowledging that because of the organisations' complexity, explaining the mode of enabling organisational ambidexterity in terms of structural and contextual ambidexterity is

insufficient to describe its occurrence in practice (Turner et al., 2016; Papachroni et al., 2016). Scholars have begun to reconceptualise the blurring of exploration and exploitation (Table 6.1.).

Structural and contextual ambidexterity is longer considered to be on opposite ends of a continuum (Turner et al., 2013) but increasingly scholars are considering a balance between these (Turner et al., 2016) vacillating activities and a synthesis (Papachroni et al., 2015) of exploration and exploitation. Just as management require a spectrum of behaviours to enable organisational ambidexterity (Carmeli and Halevi, 2009), so too do organisations require a range of implementation modes at their disposal. Thus organisational complexity is a contributory factor promoting the vacillation between exploration and exploitation.

Not only should the organisation make suitable decisions appropriate to its context, resources and available practices to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness (Birkinshaw et al., 2016), its leadership team should foster an environment where practitioners can exercise ambidextrous behaviours (Jansen et al., 2016).

Table 6.1. Reconceptualisation of Exploration and Exploitation

Conceptualisation	Identified by:	Enabled by:	Level Operationalised at:
Vacillating (Boumgarden et al., 2012)	“Temporally and sequentially alternating between organisational structures that promote with exploration or exploitation” (p. 588)	Vacillating between formal organisational modes e.g. centralisation. Inertia increases levels of exploitation and exploration	Managers select the best structure to achieve performance by alternating between exploitation and exploration
Sequential Alternation (Birkinshaw et al., 2016)	“Deliberately vacillating between exploration and exploitation over time” (p. 37)	“Focus-shifting capability”	Primarily executed at the top-executive level
Symbiosis (This research)	Interdependent relationship between exploration and exploitation	Considering exploration and exploitation indistinct input driven contributions	Enabled by practitioners who operationalize ambidexterity

Vacillating between exploration and exploitation should not be confused with the notion developed by Boumgarden et al. (2012) or Birkinshaw et al. (2016). Boumgarden and colleagues propose a temporal and sequential alternation of exploration and exploitation. Their interpretation is similar to temporal ambidexterity proposed by Turner et al. (2013). Birkinshaw and colleagues offer a model of sequential alternation. The contention of this research is that the sequential occurrence of exploration and exploitation by its very nature negates the simultaneity of competing logics (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) thus nullifying the definition proposed by March (1991). Instead, in this study the vacillation between exploration and exploitation activities implies that it cannot be seen to be on opposite ends of a continuum but is instead the blurring of these activities. Put differently, exploration and exploitation cannot be seen as absolutes, it is not mutually exclusive. There is a point on the continuum where exploration becomes exploitation and exploitation becomes exploration. The vacillating between concepts is influenced by its intended outcome and context. Therefore vacillating between exploration and exploitation is indicative of a metaphorical 'grey area' that is subject to interpretation, practitioner's viewpoint, action and interpretation.

Organisational ambidexterity moves away from an organisational level construct to having individual level dependencies. Instead we should consider the synergistic effect of organisational ambidexterity, where the sum of practitioners and their practices operating within the multiple levels of organisational praxis, produces a greater outcome than the sum of either construct individually. Not only does organisational ambidexterity move away from being something the organisation constructs to something that practitioners do (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), organisational ambidexterity should be viewed as the intertwined sum of the organisation, individual and its strategic actions and interactions.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This research contributes to the empirical enablement of organisational ambidexterity to bridge the divide between organisational ambidexterity theory and practice. It contributes to our knowledge on organisational ambidexterity theoretically and conceptually. Theoretically it contributes to ambidexterity literature by examining the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity. It takes a multilevel view of organisational ambidexterity to advance the role of individuals enabling organisational ambidexterity at various level of the organisation. In addition this research considers the causal implications of micro level actions and interactions and offers patterns to explain the interlinkages between these. Conceptually, this study advances our understanding of the constructs that underpins organisational ambidexterity. It draws on strategy as practice as the lens through which this research on organisational ambidexterity is viewed. By using a different theoretical perspective it contributes to the conceptualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006) in organisational ambidexterity literature. In so doing we have a better understanding of a well-documented strategy as practice phenomenon applied to organisational ambidexterity. The result of which advances our understanding of the interlinkages between these constructs and a better understanding of what lies at its nexus.

The outline of this final chapter is as follows: Firstly, it reiterates the conclusions drawn from each research paper. Secondly, it highlights the various contributions of this research. Thirdly, it offers a framework outlining the practical implications to managers. Next, it specifies the limitations of this research. The penultimate section sets the stage for promising new avenues of enquiry. In conclusion, a personal reflection traces the journey to complete this research.

In essence this section reflects on the concluding remarks of the investigation on organisational ambidexterity that entails bridging the divide between theory and practice. The research is aimed at enhancing our understanding of the microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity. This portfolio of research has developed and tested theoretical contentions relating to how organisational ambidexterity is enabled in practice. From this research a significant proposition is formulated: that causal explanations and knowledge patterns emerge when organisational ambidexterity is segmented into its microfoundations.

In the first research paper we identified that the little understood microfoundations of organisational ambidexterity could be contextualised into three categories of microfoundations: (1) resource microfoundations, (2) activities microfoundations and (3) systems microfoundations. Our understanding of resources follows Barney's (1991) identification of the organisational assets and strengths that organisations use to improve effectiveness and efficiency and implement their strategies. These resources are taken to mean labour, capital, time, expertise, management and information. Resource microfoundations demonstrates that in addition to practitioners' identity and job roles, how they do their work is attributable to their willingness as well as their risk-taking and problem-solving ability when dealing with opportunities and challenges. This furthers our knowledge of ambidexterity because it indicates that individuals at different levels of the organisation have the ability and capability to enact ambidexterity. But more so, it is their motivation that drives implementation. This emphasises behaviours that enable organisational ambidexterity.

Activities microfoundations indicate that the practices and actions engaged in are contingent on the organisational strategy and structures that shapes the tools and rules that enable and constrain them. They emphasise the importance of the organisation's capabilities in the enablement of organisational ambidexterity. Systems microfoundations entail more than the environment, climate and culture enabling organisational ambidexterity, they demonstrate how navigating the internal organisational structures by means of governance, lobbying, and buffering impact the enactment of organisational ambidexterity. This emphasises the social context enabling organisational ambidexterity.

The second research paper takes a practical approach to organisational ambidexterity and demonstrates how organisations configure their organisational structures to accommodate paradoxes between innovation and efficiency. We identified the various forms of organising available to organisations to balance paradoxical challenges so that the organisation can ensure longevity while sustaining existing business streams. We demonstrate three forms of organising innovation: external innovation forms, greenfields operations and virtual isolation. These enable the organisation to address the future-focused demands of innovation while simultaneously maintaining efficiency in its current business. In addition, we demonstrate how the organising behaviours at both organisational and individual level are required to manage these paradoxical challenges.

In the third research paper we identified the micro level behaviours, motivations and actions that contribute to the organisation's ability to sense and seize macro level objectives. We consider the interlinkages between praxis, practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006) by looking at organisational ambidexterity through a strategy as practice lens. The findings illustrate that at the nexus of these interconnected constructs lies an explanation of how strategising about organisational ambidexterity occurs. Three interconnections are revealed: habitude, execution and exchange. Habitude demonstrates that practitioners and their practices are so closely intertwined that they no longer consciously consider their pursuits to be exploratory or exploitative. In essence the choice becomes ingrained in their actions. It becomes something practitioners instinctively do and not something they consciously evaluate. In this way practitioners and their practices form the behavioural context that produces organisational ambidexterity.

Next, execution demonstrates the process of enacting the organisation's strategy to pursue organisational ambidexterity through the use of rules, tools and resources. It emphasises context driven parameters in which the organisation's praxis and practices enable and constrains organisational ambidexterity. Exchange demonstrates that the perceptions that practitioners hold of the organisation influences their work-life blend and motivational levels because practitioners tie their belief systems to the organisation's. Thus exchange is indicative of the directional influence of organisational ambidexterity because it is shaped by the jointly held values and beliefs emanating from practitioners and the organisational praxis. These jointly held values determines the direction that the organisation's pursuit of organisational ambidexterity takes.

7.2 Implications for Practice

This section reflects the insights gained from the evidence gathered. It is offered in the belief that management research should be translated into practice for the benefit of the recipients who need it most – the managers. The increasing volume of research on organisational ambidexterity in recent years has done much to contribute to its theoretical foundation (Jansen et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2015; Markides, 2013; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996; March, 1991). Unfortunately this vast body of work lacks practical application and benefit (Jarzabkowski et al.,

2013; O' Reilly and Tushman, 2013; Turner et al., 2013). Similarly the findings emanating from this research confirmed that interview respondents were either unfamiliar with the terms organisational ambidexterity, exploration and exploitation or that knowledge of these terms were not meaningful in their work context.

Although the theories presented in this research remain relevant and valuable, it does not provide managers with the practical tools needed (Felin and Powell, 2016) to successfully enable organisational ambidexterity in practice. Considering that this research topic has significance for the managers who will benefit from it (O' Reilly and Tushman, 2013), the following findings outline the significance of organisational ambidexterity to management and consequently practice. Based on the findings, it is proposed that management establish a framework to implement organisational ambidexterity.

The framework outlined below proposes the considerations management should heed to successfully implement organisational ambidexterity in practice. It represents a loose and flexible set of practices and principles to guide the enablement of organisational ambidexterity without being too prescriptive. It is proposed that the ensuing conceptual framework helps to understand emerging, value-creation practices. More specifically, this framework outlines practical implications to: (1) establish an organisational ambidexterity outlook, (2) establish organisational context favouring ambidexterity, (3) cascade the ambidexterity strategy, and (4) remove barriers hampering successful implementation.

7.2.1 Establish Organisational Ambidexterity Outlook

The evidence indicates that formulating an ambidexterity strategy to guide how the organisation pursues organisational ambidexterity should involve a top-down and bottom-up perspective. This is because the findings indicate that individuals at lower levels of the organisation are more motivated to pursue organisational objectives if they share in and believe in that ideal (Etelapelto et al., 2013). An organisational ambidexterity strategy is essential because it advances the organisation's ambidexterity logic and purpose (Simsek et al., 2009). Our current understanding is that the senior management team determines the overarching decision to pursue organisational ambidexterity (Carmeli and Halevi, 2009).

Literature indicates that senior executives select the arrangement to sense and seize opportunities and streamline internal activities (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). However, this research offers explanations of the role that management play in influencing the behaviour of individuals at different levels of the organisation. This is in response to concerns that we do not yet fully understand how the organisation's corporate level influences the ambidexterity strategy at lower levels of the organisation (Haveli and Carmeli, 2015).

This research assists management by advancing how individuals engage with the organisation's strategy to pursue organisational ambidexterity. It contributes that individuals at all levels of the organisation have a desire to impact the organisation and take personal ownership of their work. Therefore by including individuals at earlier stages of strategising about organisational ambidexterity equips senior management with information derived from individuals with direct customer contact. And it allows bottom-up contribution to the overall strategy ensuring greater involvement in organisational objectives (Mom et al., 2007). This study is therefore particularly relevant to the senior management team who set the strategy to pursue organisational ambidexterity because it impacts the communication of the strategy and buy-in at different levels of the organisation. For this reason knowledge of these findings should help management include practitioners during the early stages of formulating the organisational ambidexterity strategy.

7.2.2 Establish Organisational Context Favouring Ambidexterity

The evidence indicates that an environment conducive to organisational ambidexterity is essential to the successful enablement of organisational ambidexterity. This is because the context in which individuals enact organisational ambidexterity shapes their actions and influences the tools at their disposal. Our current understanding of the organisational context is that it is organisation specific as it reflects the organisation's HR practices, leadership and policies (Felin et al., 2015). This research provides evidence that organisational context is also a reflection of practitioners' perception and experience (Carsten et al., 2010), underlying values and assumptions (Buschgens et al., 2013), and a manifestation of culture (Buschgens et al., 2013). In so doing, we offer explanations of what management can do to create a favourable environment that fosters ambidexterity

and supports individuals who enact ambidexterity at different levels of organisation. This study is particularly relevant to management because we are only beginning to understand the supportive behaviours of management in shaping the organisational context and its impact on lower levels of the organisation.

7.2.3 Cascade The Ambidexterity Strategy

The findings indicate that individuals do not consciously deliberate between exploration and exploitation efforts. Instead, they do this subconsciously because the findings indicate that individuals are outcomes focused. They want to make a difference and as one manager indicated: “just get on with it”. Our current understanding of the organisation’s strategy is that once it is articulated and communicating throughout the organisation management ensures that individuals are aligned to the organisation’s exploration and exploitation endeavours. It is this alignment that increases the successful pursuit of organisational ambidexterity (Wang and Rafiq, 2014). We offer explanations on how and why management should engage individuals. Involving individual’s in disseminating the organisation’s strategy on organisational ambidexterity helps to build alignment and cohesion to the overall strategy.

Our evidence also indicates that cascading the organisation’s strategy on organisational ambidexterity entails breaking it down into smaller parts relevant to specific teams, functions or individual practitioners. In this way individuals at different hierarchical levels within those functions and teams are able to deliver toward that overall strategy without needing to focus on it. Literature indicates that management play a critical part in making sense of that overall strategy where they interpret it and create a structure for its implementation (Luscher and Lewis, 2008). The benefit of this research lies in recognising that the management team influence practitioners’ interpretation of its strategy. They do this by interpreting and making-sense of the organisational goals so that individuals are free to do the work they enjoy. This study is particularly relevant to senior management because cascading the organisational ambidexterity strategy is essential for practitioner buy-in and ownership.

7.2.4 Remove Barriers Hampering Successful Implementation

The evidence indicates that removing barriers is essentially a managerial action required to assist practitioners in the enactment of organisational ambidexterity. Turner et al. (2015) identified “buffering” as a key managerial action where managers acted as a “barrier to prevent unwarranted distractions affecting the team” while they performed their work (p. 211). This is because practitioners face process, structural and other governance restrictions that they perceive as slowing their progress or hampering their ability to perform their work. Thus removing barriers entails the actions of a more senior level individual to the practitioner who has the authority and ability to effect change. These actions are manifested as management’s ability to facilitate, circumvent and act on behalf of practitioners.

These managerial actions are important because current literature indicates that that managers help to create experts who “enhance certain organisational strategies” (Laine et al., 2016, p. 508). Consequently this research proposes that by removing barriers, management effectively creates individuals that are capable, efficient, effective and autonomous decision-makers. The benefit of this research to management lies in understanding that individuals are social creatures working within a social environment and they are dependent on the supportive behaviour of management. This study is particularly relevant to management allocating resources to exploratory or exploitative initiatives. It suggests that by removing barriers and breaking down obstacles into smaller more manageable problems that individuals can resolve, enhances the individual’s decision-making and risk-taking ability. In so doing this research has identified that future ambidexterity actions are based on the individuals’ past experience, ability and desire to make a difference.

7.3 Limitations

In addition to the limitations outlined in each respective research paper, this thesis portfolio has overarching limitations, outlined below. Firstly the empirical focus was on the telecoms and technology sector because they supported the research objectives and because the researcher was familiar with their operating

models and the way in which these industries pursue exploration and exploitation. Although measures have been taken to account for researcher bias as outlined in research paper 3, this selection meant that no other industries were included. The findings indicated that very few distinguishable differences existed between telecoms and technology companies. Future studies could be extended to other industry to compare and contrast the findings.

The study adopted a qualitative method. This empirical testing was grounded in pragmatism, one that reflected the real-life experiences of practitioners exploiting and exploring and reflected their way of thinking. This helped to provide examples of practitioners' involvement in ambidexterity as well as the enablers and constraints faced. Thus the research questions helped to initiate the process of inquiry into the little known phenomena but it did not ensure the generalisability of the results. Thus future studies could include mixed methods where the survey results across wider industries could result in the generalisability of findings.

This research was undertaken by means of semi-structured interviews. Micro-macro multilevel research by nature presents challenges pertaining to the research design and methodology. Therefore, Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011), Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), Molina-Azorin (2014) and others contend that the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in the same study contributes positively to micro-macro investigations. Likewise Biddle and Schafft (2014) recommend the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods for research on the human condition as each provide different types of analysis. Thus the combination of mixed methods research may more positively correlate to micro-macro understanding.

With regard to the outcomes, the investigation segmented organisational ambidexterity into its constituent parts. Because little is known about the microfoundations and because a practice approach to organisational ambidexterity was sought, a decision was taken to use the Jarzabkowski (2007) and Whittington (2006) contextualisation of praxis, practices and practitioners. This approach was justified because the data produced empirical evidence in support of these findings outlined in research paper 1. However, supplementary or diverse aspects underpinning organisational ambidexterity could present salient points.

7.4 Future Research

To further cement our understanding of organisational ambidexterity in practice, three new areas of research are proposed.

Firstly, we need a better understanding of who is involved in organisational ambidexterity. If strategists at all levels of the organisation strategise about organisational strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2005), we need to better understand who they are, what they do and how they do it. It is essential to understand the actions and activities that are involved, not only at management level, as most research focus on (Mom et al., 2015; Good and Michel, 2013) but more specifically at the point of enactment. Thus far empirical evidence that organisational ambidexterity occurs at all levels of the organisation has not been fully researched, and further research is required to embed this.

Secondly, we propose a more careful examination of the behavioural and psychological aspects of the proponents of organisational ambidexterity. Behavioural considerations of organisational ambidexterity have thus far extended to context-shaping capabilities (Birkinshaw et al., 2016; Zimmermann et al., 2016) much in the same way as contextual ambidexterity (Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004). But a more in-depth understanding of individual behaviour will further our understanding of the social context and role of social psychology in organisational ambidexterity practice. And from this the contributory influence of emotional, behavioural and cognitive factors that result in practice will emerge.

And thirdly, we advocate an investigation into the ways that organisations inadvertently sabotage organisational ambidexterity. Research has indicated that the implementation of organisational ambidexterity delivers performance benefits (Sarkees and Hulland, 2009; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004), yet despite its implementation organisations fail. The evidence from this research points to the lack of time individuals have at their disposal to devote to exploratory or exploitative activities. It has indicated that overcommitted resources and inflexible systems play a contributory role. But a fuller understanding of what inhibits success may pave the way to mitigating these barriers to success.

Additional research on the enablers and mediators of organisational climate and culture is required because we know very little about the phenomena of how the

organisational climate moderates the relationship between organisational ambidexterity and performance.

7.5 Personal Reflection

And in conclusion I offer a few personal words reflecting on my experience that has culminated in this research and my journey from practice to theory and beyond. My exposure to organisational ambidexterity started in a strategy lecture on red and blue ocean strategies while I completed my MBA. This provided a Eureka moment because I faced similar dualities at work and was frustrated by my inability to persuade our executives of a dual need for a strategic and operational procurement focus. Before that fateful day in a Manchester lecture room, I believed that I had the best job in the world. But on that day, not only was my MBA topic on organisational ambidexterity born but so too was a desire to research it. I was eager to further investigate the discrepancy between theory and experiences in practice. Why were the organisations' best-practice applications not emerging from academics? As a result I left a lucrative career because the passion for my work was supplanted by a desire to research my work problem. My transition to becoming a full-time student again proved to be a challenging rollercoaster in which I lost and found myself. Going from being a senior advisor to CEO's and CFO's, where management listened and respected my views to being a student again, required a huge adjustment. And during that adjustment I constantly had to remind myself why I chose academia.

My passion for organisational ambidexterity and the reassuring words of many sustained me on the many days when I was in desperate need of encouragement. But I am grateful for the opportunity to have walked this journey. I am thankful to the many people that I have met along the way who have been supportive, sobering, informative and living-proof that I am not alone, even though it felt like it on many occasions. I am passionate about organisational ambidexterity not only because it has been a part of my life for so many years, but because I have seen its value and experienced its benefits. This has made me determined to contribute research that has relevance and will impact the people that need it most – the managers who can benefit from it. But to do that, I have come to realise that practice is a shallow endeavour without theory to substantiate it.

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APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following interpretation of key terminology is used in this paper.

Term(s)	Meaning Ascribed
Exploitation	Is synonymous with efficiency, implementation, improvement and refinement (March, 1991).
Exploration	Is synonymous with flexibility, innovation, discovery, experimentation and risk-taking (March, 1991).
Individual level	Individual action independent of higher levels of analysis or discussion (Devinney, 2013).
Microfoundations	Are the “windows to decision-making processes” (Greve, 2013, p. 103) that considers how individual level factors aggregate to the collective level because individual level actors, their actions and practises have strategic consequences for the firm (Jarzabkowski, 2009).
Organisational Ambidexterity	Firm’s ability to simultaneously explore new opportunities and exploit current certainties (March, 1991).
Organisation level	The collective or organisational level includes group interactions, routines and collective action (Devinney, 2013).
Organisational Context	“organizational means and conditions that realize knowledge transfer as the relevant determinants” (Foss and Pederson, 2002, p. 49) Organisational contexts include the approach to strategy-making as well as other-related approaches concerning, for example, decision-making, planning, sense-making, and middle-manager strategising. (Vaara and Whittington, 2012).
Practices	Methods, tools and procedures used when strategizing. Cognitive, behavioural, procedural, motivational and physical practices followed within the organisation e.g. (Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2007)
Practitioner	Actors (professionals, managers, decision-makers) who shape the construction of practices through who they are and how they act (Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2007)
Praxis	Flow of activity consequential to the direction and survival of the organisation (Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2007)
Strategic Level	The strategic firm level relate to firm competition, strategic action and reaction (Devinney, 2013).
Strategising	Is the ability to use, adapt and manipulate available resources to shape a strategy over time (Jarzabkowski, 2003) as the strategising oscillates between a desired future and current activity in which the current activity helps create the future (Szompka, 1991).
Strategy as practice	Concerned with the doing of strategy; who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use and what implications this has for shaping strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2007).

APPENDIX B - INITIAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(Based on Literature Review – See Appendix C)

PREAMBLE:

Interview Contents remain confidential
Details only reported in aggregate
Notes will be taken during interview
Outline format and duration of interview
Reconfirm purpose of interview

A. Introduction

1. What is your designation?
2. What is your core role and responsibility?
3. What is the core role of your department?
4. What are the functions within your department?

B. Exploitation & Exploration

1. Do you refine or adapt existing products and services? (How?)
2. Are you free to decide what you work on (how you spend your time)?
3. What is the rate of change in your processes, techniques and technology?
4. What triggers ideas for new products and services?
5. What is your involvement with new products or services?
6. Are you involved in improvement and/or innovation?
7. Are you a specialist or a generalist?

C. Management of Ambidexterity

8. How are the department's key priorities determined?
 - Are there organisational structures that allows for innovation / improvement
 - Are there human capital structures that allows for innovation / improvement (E.g. technical staff work without market exposure)
9. Do management cascade decisions to lower levels?
10. Do management escalate changes or suggestions from lower levels?
11. How are organisational strategies formulated and how are they executed?
12. What is the role of management on different levels of the company?
13. What could management do better without incurring costs to the organisation?

D. Microfoundations

14. Does your job role determine what work you are involved in?
15. What is the role of your department within the context of the Business Unit?
16. What are the main aspects of the departmental practices (who are the key contributors / actors)?
17. Who do you interact with regularly in your daily work?
18. Which other departments do your department interact with most frequently?
19. What formal structures are in place to ensure work gets done?
 - (Apply to Q20)
20. Are there any informal structures to encourage work to be done?
 - (Apply to Q20)
21. How are the company's strategic objectives cascaded through the company?
22. What helps / hinders you from doing your daily work?
23. Who are key internal and external players in developing innovation?
24. How do the key players interact?
25. How do new processes gain legitimacy?
26. Which organisational factors are taken into account when adopting decisions?
27. Which factors have the most influence on the decision to adopt or reject new practices?
28. What impacts collaboration with other business units?

E. Causality

29. What is instrumental in the successful running of your department?
30. How do (these processes) unfold as it do in your department?
31. What factors enhance the likelihood of successful new process adaption?
32. What factors explain the success or failure of a new initiative?
33. Why was X more successful than Y?
34. Why do changes occur within your department as they do?
35. How does the strategy from management mobilise or gain support of lower level staff?
36. How do the (middle level management) preserve their authority / influence in the face of existing organisational structures
37. Is the departmental structure, function or resources a contributor to the occurrence of innovation / improvement?

LASTLY

Is there anything you would like to add?

Is there anything you believe I should know about or look into?

Do you have any questions?

Would you be willing to participate in the survey?

IN CONCLUSION:

Thank candidate for time

Explain next steps

Explain when outcome may be available

APPENDIX C - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL DATA SOURCE

Topic	Instrument Used	Scholar
Management of Ambidexterity	Survey	Birkinshaw & Gibson (2004)
Causality	Survey	Comez, Erdil, Alpan and Kitapci (2011)
Ambidexterity	Survey	Jansen (2005)
Microfoundations	Semi-structured Interview	Jarzabkowski (2005)
Microfoundations; Causality	Semi-structured Interview	Mantere (2005)
Microfoundations	Semi-structured interviews	Angwin, Paroutis, Connell (2015)
Practices	Interviews	Bloom and Van Reenen (2010)

APPENDIX D. FINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(Evolved as Interviews Progressed)

PREAMBLE

Interview Contents remain confidential

Details only reported in aggregate

Consent granted to use quotes for research

F. Introduction

1. Tell me about what you do?
2. What functions do your department perform?

G. Exploration

1. Can you identify with these 4 statements:
 - i. New ideas are encouraged and accepted in your department
 - ii. Your department continually looks for new opportunities to bring about change
 - iii. You are able to experiment with new ideas if it can bring about benefits
 - iv. Risk-taking is encouraged to enable innovation
2. How is something new introduced into the organisation?
- (It may be new ideas, products, services, processes etc.)
3. Using that example can you explain how it was implemented?

H. Exploitation

1. Do you relate to these 4 statements:
 - i. Improving existing policies and processes is encouraged in your department
 - ii. You are encouraged to implement any changes
 - iii. The effectiveness and efficiency of your practices are measured and quantified
 - iv. You actively update out-dated practices
2. How do you make improvements to existing practices?
(It may include procedures, tools or techniques)
3. Are your current practices effective?

- (If not, what needs to change?)

I. Implementations of Exploration and Exploitation

1. What were the learnings from an implementation that failed?
2. If you could make your department more effective or efficient, what would you change?
3. What are the key drivers of successful implementations?
4. Would you implement innovation and improvement in the same way?

J. Organisational Ambidexterity Decisions

1. Do you consider your core responsibility to be exploration, exploitation or both?
- (Is there a difference between your core role, exploration and exploitation?)
2. How do you prioritise your responsibilities?
3. Can you influence what you work on?
4. What do you need to get things done or be productive?
- (It may include climate/environment/structure/people)
5. What do you like most about your job?
6. What do you like least about your job?
7. How do you communicate about exploration or exploitation?
8. Are there problems associated with implementing exploration and exploitation simultaneously?
9. Where do decisions to implement exploration and exploitation occur?
10. If you could, what you would do differently about pursuing new opportunities or existing priorities?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add or tell me about exploration and exploitation?

K. In Conclusion

Thank candidate for time

Explain next steps

APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

Interviews	Company	Job Role	Respondents
Technology	24		
	Tech.Company A		16
		Specialist	8
		Manager	3
		Head of Team	2
		Director	3
	Tech.Company B		5
		Specialist	2
		Head of Team	2
		Director	1
	Tech.Company C		3
		Manager	1
		Head of Team	1
		Director	1
Telecoms	23		
	Tel.Company A		15
		Specialist	1
		Manager	2
		Senior Manager	5
		Head of Team	6
		Director	1
	Tel.Company B		4
		Manager	1
		Senior Manager	1
		Head of Team	1
		Director	1
	Tel.Company C		4
		Manager	1
		Senior Manager	1
		Head of Team	1
		Director	1

APPENDIX F. INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project

Worlds Apart: Bridging the Divide between Organisational Ambidexterity Theory and Practice

Details of Project

This PhD project is an exploratory study of organisational ambidexterity (which is a firm's ability to pursue innovation and improvement simultaneously) to understand how it is achieved in practice. The study examines how individuals shape the way in which the organisation strategises about organisational ambidexterity by who they are, how they act and what practices they call on when executing that strategy.

Contact Details

For further information about the research or your interview data, please contact: Natasha Rose,
School of Management, University of Bath, UK. Tel: 00 44 (0) 7354773781, Email: n.rose@bath.ac.uk

Should you have concerns or questions that you would like to discuss with the researcher's supervisors, contact:
Prof Juani Swart, Associate Dean of Faculty, University of Bath, mnsias@bath.ac.uk
Prof Michael Mayer, Head of Division Strategy & Operations, University of Bath, m.c.j.mayer@bath.ac.uk

Confidentiality

All interview recordings, transcripts and visual presentations will be held in confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act, Code of Good Practice in Research Integrity as well as the university's general data protection guidelines. Upon request, you will be provided with a copy of your interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please provide your email below).

Anonymity

Any data that the researcher extracts from this project for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstance, contain names, reveal your identity, department, function or the organisation's name.

CONSENT

I voluntarily agree to participate and to the use of my data for the purposes of research as specified above. I have read and understood the explanatory information. I understand that I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewer.

TICK HERE: ☐

DATE.....

Note: Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data

Name of interviewee:..... (Optional)

Signature:

Email/phone:..... (Optional)

Signature of researcher.....

[2 copies to be signed by both interviewee and researcher, one kept by each.]

